

Alfred pseud. [i.e. Sir J. B. Burges]
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ALFRED'S LETTERS;

OR, A

REVIEW

OF THE

POLITICAL STATE OF EUROPE,

TO THE END OF THE SUMMER 1792.

AS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN

THE SUN.

LONDON:

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ALFRED. LIT. FRS.



THE SUN

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ADVERTISEMENT.

ALFRED's LETTERS are already known. They go into the World in the form of a Volume, with an established Reputation. They require not therefore the usual formality of a Prefatory Introduction; the CONDUCTOR of THE SUN thinks it, however, necessary to say, that he should have thought himself equally deficient in gratitude to the Writer of these Letters, and in duty to the Public, if he had not formed the present Volume, and presented it in a manner which, he trusts, will challenge the public approbation.

*Sun-Office, 112 Strand,
March 30, 1793.*

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APPENDIX

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and the work of a Press which is
thought highly of by the public
the Writers of these Letters, and is due to the
Public. It is not the least of the
and presented it in a manner which, we trust, will
challenge the public attention.

London, 112, Strand,
Sept. 20, 1893.

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V I E W, &c.

TO THE

CONDUCTOR OF THE SUN.

LETTER I.

SIR,

WHEN your Proposal for publishing a New Paper first came to my hands, I was much pleased to find, that you had not only adopted, but fairly avowed your intention of supporting the measures of the present Government, and that you disdained that specious but fallacious affectation of neutrality in politics, which, you justly observed, was obnoxious to the ardent and generous temper of Englishmen.

In times like the present, when, under the auspicious guidance of those Ministers whom it has pleased His Majesty to select for the management of public affairs, we enjoy as much possible good as ever fell to the lot of a people, and when the

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arts

arts of domestic as well as foreign incendiaries have been so generally, though I trust unsuccessfully, employed to reduce Great Britain to the level of the degraded and unhappy kingdom of France, such an avowal does honour to your principles and feelings.

It would be an insult to those of my Countrymen, were it to be supposed, that any among them, who have sense to feel the blessings they enjoy, or have a wish to transmit them to their posterity, can be wanting in their support of him, who thus stands forward as the Champion of their Cause. For my own part, I feel it to be the duty of every one who participates in the prosperity of his country, to lend his aid for the support and increase of it; and I conceive I cannot so well perform this duty, as by laying before the Public, through the channel of your Paper, the result of those observations, which a pretty constant attention to the passing events of our own time, and the opportunities I have had of conversing with some leading characters, both at home and abroad, have enabled me to make.

It appears to me, that, at the outset of a publication like your's, a fair and impartial view of the actual state of the several countries of Europe, and such a retrospect of modern political transactions,

transactions, as may tend to elucidate their existing systems and situations, cannot be unacceptable to your Readers. Many attempts have been made, and, I am sorry to say, are daily making, to mislead the Public, upon points of the greatest importance to their interests. It shall be my endeavour to administer an antidote to this poison, and to remove the veil which prejudice or ignorance may have thrown over truth. In my ensuing Letters, I propose to pursue this object. The undertaking, I know, is arduous; and of my capacity to execute it, the Public must be the judge. I shall assume no other title to their favour, than those of authenticity in my statements, and of impartiality in my deductions.

In the course of political disquisitions, nothing, perhaps, is more difficult to avoid, than that personal and acrimonious species of attack, upon nations, as well as individuals, which has of late so much disgraced the character of our Writers. Aware of this, I am desirous, as early as possible, to assure your Readers, that as my object is to instruct and inform, it shall be my constant endeavour to avoid every such reflection. That cause must indeed be bad, which requires for its support, the pen of the libeller. Cases enough will occur, in an historical research of

this nature, to call forth the just and manly censure which folly and depravity deserve. On such occasions, to refrain from drawing the conclusion which the premises may warrant, were a desertion from a public duty; and he, who feared to deliver an opinion fairly deducible from established facts, would justly merit censure himself. The politics which have directed the councils of a nation, may be so wicked or absurd---the conduct of political individuals, may have been so profligate or foolish---and the truth of history may so entirely depend on a fair and impartial statement of such councils and such conduct---that an alternative may sometimes occur, of either abandoning veracity, or of submitting to the imputation of reflecting personally on well-known characters. In such a case, the Public will surely support the Writer, who, never wantonly or unnecessarily deviating from the rule of avoiding personalities, pursues with decency and truth the line of fair and candid history. Should any thing, in my ensuing Letters, come home to the hearts and feelings of any of the actors on the great stage of politics, I will only say, and I trust the Public will say with me, that, where the actions of a nation, or of an individual, are a libel on themselves, the actor, and not the narrator, ought to be blamed.

ALFRED.

LETTER II.

SIR,

AMIDST the strange and novel events which have marked the modern history of the world, we may well consider, as not the least extraordinary, the rapid as well as important alterations, which have, without previous notice, and apparently without much reasonable cause, occurred in the relative situations of the principal European Powers, within the last twelve months. When we compare their actual state with that in which we saw them at so recent a period, we shall find an almost generally new system: ancient alliances dissolved, or dissolving; old hatreds reconciled, and converted into the strictest connection; the jarring interests which threatened immediate war, converted into a bond of intimate union; and a system of confederation cemented between those Powers which lately breathed defiance, and denounced against each other the terrors of war, and all the horrors of mutual devastation.

To trace the causes of this strange phenomenon---to bring down the History of Europe

to the moment when, in your New Paper, you announce yourself to the Public as the early and faithful Chronicler of Foreign Transactions, is the object which I hope to fulfill in my following Letters.

With this view, it is my intention to begin, by briefly stating the situations of the several Powers, at that period of the last year, when the Temple of Janus was shut, and when the rivalry of mutual interests had terminated by a succession of Treaties, which promised, to all appearance, at least a short continuation of peace, if not a long suspension of those outrages which had exhausted the resources and diminished the population of the Belligerent Powers. Should any particular circumstances, of importance to the existing interests of Europe, and of a nature not to be included in the preceding Sketch, then remain to be told, I propose to enter upon their discussion; and I shall thus be enabled, distinctly, and without launching into an unnecessary detail, to develop the causes of that surprizing change, which so suddenly disturbed the peace of Europe, and plunged her into calamities more horrid in themselves, and more likely to be followed by consequences subversive of existing systems, than any which hitherto have filled the page of history,

history, or have raised the wonder and abhorrence of the philosophical observer of life and manners,

In executing this task, it shall be my endeavour, as much as possible, to bring these several matters to that point the most instructive and material for ourselves---that in which they already have, or in which they may eventually have, an influence upon our own country. By adopting a plan of this nature, we make the best use of our own past experience, and of the experience of others; we profit by the folly as well as by the wisdom of other States; and we learn to appreciate the true value of those measures, which have been the theme of eulogium, or the object of invective, as it happened to suit the interests of those who pronounced a judgment upon them.

ALFRED.

LETTER III.

SIR,

IN looking back to the state of the different European Powers at the beginning of the summer 1791, our attention is naturally arrested, in the first place, by the Empire of Russia, the greatest and most powerful of all the Northern States. It extends over a country, comprising nearly half of the ancient world, rich in its natural productions, fertile of resources, and rapidly advancing by its conquests, its cessions, and the unceasing and insatiable ambition of its rulers, to a superiority yet more alarming to the general interests both of Europe and of Asia, than appears to have been thought probable by those who have delivered their sentiments upon the subject.

The plan of aggrandizement originally formed by Peter I. has been invariably pursued by his Successors. Their conquests, or usurpations, have made them masters of the Crimea, of the
northern

northern coasts of the Black Sea, of great part of Poland, Finland, and Tartary, and of the coasts and islands of the Northern and Eastern Oceans. They have shewn a decided intention---as yet indeed unattended with success, though certainly not abandoned---of extending the limits of their Empire over all the possessions of the Turks, not only in Europe, but in Asia and Africa; and of gaining such a footing in the South of Europe, as may enable them to maintain as great an ascendancy there, as they have already been able to establish among the Northern Powers. Nor with these vast plans of aggrandizement, is it probable that the rulers of Russia can be satisfied. The mighty Empires of China and of Persia, and even the remoter shores of North-West America, afford a tempting object to their gigantic ambition; and however, to suit the purposes of party, the moderation and equity of the Russian councils have, of late, formed the theme of public declamation, there cannot be a more probable supposition, or one more likely to be realized, even in our own times, than that attempts will actually be made to carry these ideas into effect.

The formidable naval power of Russia, which has long rendered her supreme in the Baltic, now promises to make her equally respected in the
Black

Black Sea. By the acquisition of Oczakow, the means of realizing all the advantages of the Crimea have been obtained. The coasts of Turkey, and even Constantinople itself, are exposed to a perpetual alarm; for where can there be security, when to such a power are ensured the facility of immediate access, and the irresistible means of obtaining the long avowed and long attempted objects of her monopolizing ambition?

The power and the views of Russia are of too much importance to Great Britain, to be passed over in a slight and accidental way. In the progress of this Review, many occasions will occur, of discussing at large the magnitude of the one, and the tendency of the other. They call loudly for the jealous and watchful attention of this country; whose political as well as commercial interests depend, much more than I believe is generally supposed, on preventing the accomplishment of those mighty projects which the ambition of Catherine the Second has planned for the increase of her own power, and consequently for the abasement of that of England. These have been so many, and have been so implicated with the general politics of Europe, that it would be doing them injustice to particularize them, without, at the same time, shewing their mutual dependance on each other.

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I purpose, therefore, in the course of my correspondence, to enter somewhat fully into a detail of these important points, in order the more distinctly to ascertain their motives, progress, and effect.

ALFRED.

LETTER IV.

SIR,

THE Kingdom of Prussia had arisen to its present extent and power, under the successive governments of wise and able Princes. Ever attentive to their immediate interests, and little scrupulous as to the means of advancing them, they sagaciously availed themselves of the existing circumstances of Europe, and employed their resources and their subjects, the former œconomically, the latter with profusion, on a steady and uniform plan of aggrandizement. The Kings of Prussia never lost an opportunity of increasing their

their dominions by war, or of improving them by the arts of peace. Successful in both, the House of Brandenburg became the undisputed master of Silesia and Franconia, of the whole of Prussia, and of much of its neighbouring territory in Poland, Pomerania, and Germany. The predominance of Prussia in the Empire became an equivalent to that of the House of Austria; and her influence in Poland had not only completely subverted the ancient tyranny of Russia, but had, in fact, made her mistress of that country, and of all its political and commercial advantages.

By the Treaties she had recently formed with that Republic and the Ottoman Porte, and more especially by her alliance with England and Holland, she was become invulnerable; for what Power, or what combination of Powers, could have dared to attack a Confederacy, founded on a mutual co-incidence of interests, and uniting such a military and maritime force? Her commerce and manufactures flourished; her provinces were well cultivated, and abounding in inhabitants; and, by a singularly good management, a standing army of more than two hundred thousand men, the best appointed and disciplined in Europe, had been converted into the means of improving the

the agriculture and police of the country. Her people were contented and happy; her laws were simple, and well executed; the efforts of popular tumult were less known in her dominions than in any other kingdom of Europe; her actual treasure was immense, and her resources, unaffected by any extraordinary financial exertions, were daily increasing.

Such was the portrait of Prussia at the beginning of the summer 1791. When the situation of the other Continental Powers, at the same period, shall have been sketched, will it not be natural to revert to this picture, and to enquire how far the events of a twelvemonth may have added to, or diminished, her weight and importance?

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER V.

SIR,

IN proportion as the power of Russia and Prussia increased, that of Denmark and Sweden have gradually diminished.

Comparatively weak in her resources, and unable to withstand the dominant influence of her more fortunate and powerful neighbours, Denmark has sunk into the condition of a secondary power, content to enjoy the provinces she yet can call her own, and masking under the thin veil of moderation and neutrality, her incapacity of taking an active part in the politics or warfare of Europe.

Decked as she once was, with a Triple Crown of Northern Sovereignty, she has become the feeble instrument of a government formerly numbered among her dependants; and the successors

cessors of a Margaret of Waldemar now bow before the influence of a new Semiramis of the North. In the two Belts and the Sound, on the Danish and Norwegian coasts, and in Holstein, the Courts of St. Petersburg and Berlin still permit them to exercise a dominion; but their maritime resources depend on the good will of a superior naval power, which, at any time, may impair or annihilate them; and Holstein must answer to Prussia, for the good and obedient behaviour of the Danish Court.

If, on any occasion, the natural impulse of taking some part in the depending events, has induced it to step beyond its usual line of inaction, a hint from irresistible authority has sufficed to check the momentary ardour, and to repress an effusion, which there was no internal strength to support. When, in 1789, the phenomenon of a Danish army threatened a diversion of the Swedish power, though their cause was that of Russia, a friendly hint from Prussia and England suddenly suspended their military operations, and Denmark relapsed into an inactive neutrality.

When, in 1791, the circumstances of the moment encouraged her to bring forward a proposal of mediation, founded, as she asserted, and

as undoubtedly was the fact, on the idea suggested by the Court of St. Petersburg itself, when apprehensive of the consequences of the armed interference of the Allies; a single word from the Empress---when recovered from her terror, and assured, it is said, by an extraordinary mission from a certain party in this country, that no farther danger was to be apprehended---sufficed to shut the mouth of her officious and subservient friend, and to make her, however reluctantly, acquiesce in the proud and insulting assertion of her having taken a step unauthorized by the Russian Court.

The councils and the arms of Denmark have indeed ceased to have any perceptible influence on the politics of Europe; and the jealousy of her rival neighbours, and the impossibility of settling their respective proportions of her spoil, are, perhaps, the best security for the continuance of a Monarchy, which has neither resources to employ, nor the energy of an effective Sovereign to put them into action.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER VI

SIR,

THOUGH a succession of heroic Kings had gradually raised the national character of Sweden higher than that of her Danish rival, it is certain, that their knight-errantry materially injured her interests, and, in a great degree, accelerated the operation of those irresistible causes, which have at length brought her low in the scale of European Powers. Still suffering under the fatal consequences brought upon her by the extravagant, though brilliant enthusiasm of her Monarch, with exhausted resources, and a discontented people, her evident policy, at the period to which I now allude, was to adopt, and vigorously to pursue, a settled plan of peace with the surrounding Powers, a relinquishment of the visionary schemes of foreign and remote warfare, the reduction of existing imposts, and the frugal administration of the national revenue.

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These, however, appear to have formed no part of the system of the brave and visionary Gustavus. Without money, credit, or resources; without an army, or a fleet; without a single object of aggrandizement or advantage in view; he flew from the yet bleeding and impoverished country where he reigned, and where he owed a vast debt of duty to a generous and suffering people, to offer his services as the leader of a foreign army, against a people with whom, however misguided and wrong, he had no further cause of quarrel, than that which every Monarch and every feeling mind had equally with himself. He prepared to abandon every domestic consideration, and every object which, as father of his country, he was bound to regard as sacred, to embark on an enterprize, to which he had no other call than that impulse of romantic chivalry which had already carried him, in a juster and more warrantable cause, to the gates of St. Petersburg.

We beheld, at the period to which we are now looking back, the strange and unparalleled exhibition of a Monarch wandering through Europe, proffering his services as a volunteer, and rejected by the Powers whose armies he offered to lead. We saw him speculating upon foreign
victories

victories and conquests, at the moment when the strength and finances of his own kingdom were almost annihilated ; and ardent for the acquisition of remote glory, when the hand of the assassin was preparing for him, at home, the dagger and the bullet which so soon were to terminate the career of his ambition.

ALFRED.

LETTER VII

SIR,

TO form a proper judgment of the situation of Poland at the beginning of the summer 1791, it will be necessary to enter into a detail of some circumstances preceding that period, which combined to produce the Revolution that took place on the 3d of May.

The situation of Poland has long been unfortunate, and every material event in its history is so implicated with that of its surrounding Powers, that it is impossible to give an account of it, without going somewhat largely into a detail of their transactions; and such has been the nature of their interference, that, whether it has been exerted in favour of the rights and liberties of the Republic, or whether it has been employed for the purpose of invading and curtailing them, every particular presents itself under the black and hateful aspect of falsehood, fraud, or rapacity. The history of the celebrated partition of Poland affords an ample proof of the truth of this assertion.---We shall see whether it is in any degree weakened by the system since pursued by the Courts of Berlin, St. Petersburg, and Vienna.

The fate of Poland, indeed, has long been singularly cruel. With a Monarch at her head, the most amiable and excellent of men, whose virtues and magnanimity added fresh honours to the crown he wore; whom to know, was the wish of every good man, as it was his ambition to deserve his approbation; who had been tried in the school of adversity, and who had carried to the throne the gallant spirit and the honourable feelings of a gentleman:---With a country
rich

rich in every production of nature, and, from its situation, and various local circumstances, as it were, destined to be the first and most powerful of all the European States;---with a brave and generous people, enthusiastically attached to their native soil, and ever ready to shed their blood in its defence :---With these advantages, and with these supports, devoted Poland has been long the sport of tyrants, and the prey of usurpers. Her country has rarely been allowed to rest from the fury of the spoiler, or the firebrand of the invader; her laws have been trodden under foot; her liberties have been oppressed, her crown has been set to sale, or has been given, against her consent, and in opposition to her best interests, to the hireling parasite of an hostile court. ---Nor have the ravages of war, and the horrors of contending factions, though they deluged her bosom with blood, and destroyed the energy of her public as well as social feelings, been the greatest curses which the hand of Providence has doomed her to suffer. Reserved to exhibit a new model of degradation, and to prove to what a depth of abasement even powerful kingdoms may be brought, if they want the means of opposing with effect the ambition and avarice of their neighbours; she has been made the victim of a confederation, united for the avowed purpose

of spoliation. Her best and most valuable provinces have been torn from her, without a shadow of pretence, and without the semblance of a claim. Those who had before been inveterate enemies, forgot their ancient feuds; and, like banditti brooding over their spoils in the recesses of a forest, they divided their plunder, and amicably measured out their respective portions of her territory---or perhaps, more like the savage Abyssinians, they devoured the reeking slices from their quivering victim, and left it a remnant of suffering life, to become at a future moment the fresh object of their insatiable appetites.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER VIII

SIR,

HAD the Powers, who thus effected the partition of Poland, been contented with the several portions they usurped, and had they permitted that part of the country, which they still condescended to term the Republic of Poland, to enjoy any thing like a free agency, and to avail itself of the mutilated advantages which it still might have possessed, from the richness of its natural productions, and the spirit of its people, much would have been wanting to fulfill the fatal dispensation which that devoted country was doomed to experience, and the measure of its humiliation would not have overflowed.---Such, however, was not the conduct held towards her. It was not enough to have torn from her her best and finest provinces: her remaining territory, the fruits of her soil, and the advantages of her commerce, were baits too tempting not to be caught at by the grasping hand of ambition.

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To refrain from the attainment of these objects, indeed, as little suited the inclinations, as it did the interests of the three Powers. The most unforgiving are those who have injured the most deeply; and the most rapacious are those who have tasted the most freely of the fruits of rapacity.

We cannot, therefore, be surprized, that they lost no time or opportunity in their separate endeavours, to secure to themselves the remainder of those good things of which they had already taken so large a share. The mode of acquiring it, however, became now very different from that which had been adopted in the case of the Partition. There, the Triumvirate, equally disposed to plunder, yet unwilling to allow each other to take too large a proportion of the spoil, with rule and compass measured out, and agreed upon the proportions of each share, and, according to their several judgments, balanced nicely their relative advantages. The transaction, having a mutual interest for its basis, was conducted with facility and speed, and, according to the language of less dignified dividers of booty, very much upon honour.

When the partnership, however, was dissolved, and each Sovereign retired with his acquisition,
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such temper and condescension were no more to be expected. Whichever of them, in future, might be disposed to add to his share, could no longer look for either. Were he to have employed force, and to have attempted a farther seizure by the way of arms, the others would doubtless have been struck with the iniquity of such an enterprize, as leading to the unjust acquisition of a personal advantage, without any compensation to themselves; and the plunderers of Poland would have drawn their swords to repel so impudent an aggression.---The arts of policy, the cabals of statesmen, and the intrigues of ministers, were therefore the only weapons which could be employed; and influence and corruption were to be tried, to wring from the Poles what yet remained to them from the armed hand of oppression.

It must, however, be observed, that, though in portioning out the respective shares of each Sovereign, great equity and good faith had been observed, yet the acquisition made by each, from the nature of situations, and other irresistible causes, became of very different degrees of value. The portion of Austria, rich and extensive as it might be, was neither so valuable as a territory, nor capable of being converted to such extensive means of aggrandizement, as those laid hold of by Russia and Prussia. The addition of sea-coast,

coast, and the connecting links between divided provinces, were advantages the latter Powers possessed from local circumstances, which the King of Hungary could not command. The same inequality prevailed after the partition; and it was soon seen, that the Northern neighbours were alone to derive, from the remaining country of Poland, the advantages resulting from the exertions of intrigue and influence. They saw it first themselves, and lost no time in their endeavours to obtain them. The contest, however, between the rival courts, was of no long continuance. The genius of the Empress prevailed over that of Frederick III. She stretched over the helpless Republic her kind and protecting hand. She new-modelled and guaranteed their constitution; she drew them completely within the sphere of her domination, and made their political existence depend solely on her will.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER IX.

SIR,

THE influence of Russia having been established in Poland, or, in other words, her dominion over the territories remaining to the Republic, after the partition, having been fixed by her arts, and the apprehension of her irresistible force, nothing remained to the King of Prussia, but a judicious management of those provinces he had usurped, and the employment of the means they afforded him, of drawing advantage from the territory which he had not been able to acquire. Reserving to himself the privilege of supplanting his good friend and ally, whenever an opportunity of doing so with effect should present itself, and determined, conformably with that moral principle of expediency by which his conduct was so generally actuated, not to allow such an opportunity to escape him, he set about the intermediate work of increasing his revenue and resources, and of making the western part of the Republic, as well as the capital itself, so dependant

ant upon his pleasure, and so sensible of the power he possessed of oppressing them, as to render it worth their while to sacrifice largely, in order to obtain, in return, some alleviation of the distresses he brought upon them.

Having in his hands a considerable portion of the country which lies between Warsaw and Dantzic, and naturally wishing to become master, in name, as well as in fact, of the latter city and its territory, and of the town of Thorn, he lost no time in devising and executing such plans of regulation, as were calculated the most to distress these luckless neighbours, and to make it impossible for them to avail themselves of any of their resources, otherwise than as abject dependants on his good pleasure. The course of the Vistula, therefore, which was the channel by which the productions of Northern Poland were conveyed through Dantzic to the rest of Europe, was in the first instance to be regulated; and, that this might be done effectually, and without affording to the Poles an opportunity of opposing the oppressions under which they might in future labour, the old expedient of a Treaty was had recourse to.

In almost all Treaties, one of the contracting parties must have a decided advantage; for, however clearly their respective interests may appear to

to have been defined, a thousand causes, incalculable before the operations of the Treaty are known, must combine to give to one side a superiority. But where a Treaty, and, above all, a Treaty of Commerce, is made between unequal parties---where the one is powerful, and the other weak---where the former dictates his conditions, and the latter accepts of them, as its only means of avoiding something worse---it is not to be wondered at, if the advantages are all on one side; and that, while the one grows rich and powerful, the other daily feels more and more the insulting comparison between subjection and superiority.

The late King of Prussia was not of a disposition to forego any advantage which he could obtain; and, to have foregone the advantages to be thus obtained on the side of Poland, was a weakness very unworthy of that Monarch's enlarged way of thinking. Barriers and custom-houses, transit-duties and fiscal-rates, revenue officers and Prussian grenadiers, combined to exhaust and to harass the helpless Poles. They had, it is true, the absolute and undisputed possession of the soil, and the use of the stream. Prussia insisted on no more than the produce and the navigation; and while, with a forced and somewhat unaccountable modesty, she acknowledged the right and the sovereignty of the Republic,

public, she took great care to deprive her of every advantage resulting from either. With the like moderation she acted towards Dantzic: she confessed her freedom and independence, while she treated her as a slave and a vassal; and protested against every appearance of constraint, while she took care to have it clearly understood, that the existence of the place depended on its obedience to her dictates.

ALFRED.

LETTER X.

SIR,

WERE it possible to appreciate the conduct of absolute power by the ordinary rules of morality, it surely ought not to be considered as an unfounded or unreasonable assertion, that the advantages thus gained by Prussia, by the way of treaty and internal regulation, over the resistless Poles,

Poles, were at least as great as she could reasonably have wished to obtain, after the violence she had committed by the partition, and the engagements of amity and guarantee she had afterwards contracted. Such rules, however, though perpetually talked about, have but little influence. These abstract principles, though they may adorn a negotiation, and swell a period in a dispatch or manifesto, are too weak to stand in competition with ambition and avarice. Is a province to be connected---a boundary more securely to be ascertained---or the arrondissement of a territory to be completed? The stratagems of the cabinet, or, should they prove insufficient, the terrors of an armed force, are immediately called into action; the guilt of possessing, and of refusing to give up, an indisputable right, is to be punished by the sword; and the more satisfied the invader is of his own oppressive conduct, the more strenuously does he vociferate his moderation and love of justice. The famous exclamation of "*O! si mihi Angulus iste proximus accedat, qui nunc denormat Agellum,*" has been breathed by every depredator, from Nimrod, to the invaders of Savoy and Frankfort; for experience teaches us, that nations as well as sovereigns may be unjust and oppressive; and that tyranny, when divided among thousands, becomes proportionably more horrid and destructive.

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To have expected any other line of conduct than that to which I have alluded, from the late King of Prussia, would have argued little knowledge of him, and still less of human nature. He indeed left little to conjecture; for he soon made it sufficiently known, that the measure of his oppressions and exactions in Poland should never be diminished, till his favourite point, of annexing Dantzic and Thorn in full sovereignty to his dominions, should be effected. That being done, a hope was held out to the Poles, of more halcyon days, when the hard hand of labour should no longer be exerted in vain, and when the trader should be no more subjected to the gripe of a foreign tax-gatherer.

While things were thus circumstanced, the mighty Frederick expired, and left his dominions and his projects to a successor, whose merits cannot be unknown. The plan of aggrandizement which had raised the grand masters of the Teutonic Order to the throne of Prussia, and which had carefully been handed down without impeachment, from one ambitious Prince to another, lost nothing by this change, at least in point of energy, and a desire of pursuing it with vigour. The eagerness of the new King to pursue his uncle's plans, and his unremitting efforts to carry them into effect, soon became apparent. With a treasure

sure of fifteen millions sterling, with an immense army, with spirits unsubdued by long restraint, and with the confidence inspired by hope and inexperience, he looked forward with eagerness to the attainment of this favourite object, which now indeed appeared to come within his grasp, in consequence of the diversion of the Russian force by the Turkish war, and the alliance which a fortunate concurrence of circumstances had occasioned between himself and the maritime powers. The field appeared clear before him, and the experience of a Russian government had inclined the Poles to second his views, of depriving that country of the influence it had usurped.

Let us trace the steps which they jointly took for this purpose.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XL

SIR,

THE first overtures of Prussia, with the view I mentioned in my last letter, were tolerably decisive, as well as demonstrative of that spirit of dictation which had so strongly marked the whole of the conduct of that government during the preceding reign. The new King had two objects in view—the annihilation of the Russian influence in Poland, and the substitution of his own in its place. To effect the first, was to weaken the power of a formidable rival, whose pertinacity in the work of aggrandizement, and whose immeasurable ambition, he well knew and dreaded. The further acquisition of so important a point, as on the ruin of her influence to establish his own, was going as far as it was possible for him to go, and, in addition to the former advantage, must necessarily have increased the power of Prussia, beyond any other measure which could have been adopted. It was, in fact,

to add Poland to his existing dominions; for, under the circumstances of that country, with an elective monarchy, a mutilated territory, and a situation which made it entirely dependant on its neighbours for the enjoyment of its natural and commercial productions, to influence was to command.

His Prussian Majesty was fully sensible that Russia had obtained this important advantage. He also knew, that the circumstances of the Empress, who, by being engaged in the Turkish war, had been necessitated to employ elsewhere the forces which had obtained it, had induced her to propose very flattering terms to the Poles; the adoption of which would have made it very difficult for him to undermine her.

Alarmed by the apprehension of such a consequence, and perceiving that the moment was arrived when he might safely throw off the mask he had so long been constrained to wear, he determined to profit by the critical situation of affairs; and he accordingly lost no time in exerting his utmost powers to counteract the Empress, and to obtain the important object he had in view. The Republic speedily found itself reduced to the alternative, of renouncing its alliance with Russia, or of being treated as an enemy by Prussia.

Without any motive (but that of necessity) for being connected with either power, and taught, by a long and fatal experience, what little reliance was to be had on the splendid promises which thinly gilded over their real intentions, the Republic would probably have rejoiced to get rid of the one, without being obliged to have recourse to the other. Such a fate, however, was beyond its power. The King of Prussia, in addition to the forcible argument of being at the head of more than two hundred thousand men, held out the dazzling image of the great and lasting advantages, which were to follow from an alliance with him, the ally of England and Holland, and the only Power which could preponderate in the North against Russia. It was to give the Republic a settled form of government, to destroy for ever the seeds of its ancient anarchy, to make it flourishing, powerful, and happy. Prussia, too, professing herself above the paltry arts which other Powers had exercised, held out the flattering hope, of her being not only ready to renounce those benefits which Russia had derived from the unsettled state of the Polish government, but anxious to prevent their being enjoyed by any foreign Power in future. She therefore added to her other offers, that of the establishment of a new constitution, which was to strengthen and consolidate the vigour of the country, and
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to raise her as high among the nations of Europe as she was entitled to be by her various natural advantages.

Nor was the earnestness with which this tempting offer was made less memorable than the offer itself. It was proposed as an indispensable previous condition, without which it was impossible for Prussia to form any permanent connexion with the Republic, but with which, such an union might be formed between two powerful and independent countries, as would be irresistible, and would conduce equally to the advantage of both. It was, however, obvious, that the perfection of so great a work would require a considerable time; and, in truth, it would have required much more than was consistent with the views of his Prussian Majesty, who wished to carry his immediate point, and who, perhaps, never seriously meant to go beyond professions with regard to the other. The prospect of such a change was, however, sufficiently flattering to Poland, from whom such pleasing visions had long been withheld, and to whom they were dazzling in proportion as they were new; and, as her new friend pressed forward the conclusion of the Treaty, there was no great difficulty in arranging the matter in a way agreeable to them both.

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It was determined to settle the fundamental points on which the projected government was to be formed. As soon as they were mutually agreed upon (which, as both parties were in good humour, and each in its way interested to conclude immediately, was not a matter of much difficulty) the Treaty of Alliance, containing a formal engagement on the part of Prussia to guarantee the independence of the internal government of Poland, by which both parties understood the government which was speedily to be settled, was signed on the 29th of March 1790, and was immediately after ratified.

ALFRED,

LETTER

LETTER XII.

SIR,

THE King of Prussia having thus carried his point, the Poles, who saw the advantages resulting from a realization of the hopes he had held out to them, and who depended on the support he had engaged to afford them, lost no time in pushing forward their great work of reformation, and of emancipating themselves from the dependence on foreign nations, which the weakness of their government had so long compelled them to undergo. They accordingly set in good earnest about preparing what they termed their Constitutional Act; which was a project or synopsis of the new government they proposed to establish, and in which the points agreed upon with the King of Prussia, and stated in general terms in the Treaty of Alliance, were completely developed. This was digested, and submitted to the consideration of the States of the Republic, who were convened for that purpose in the month of August 1790.

The miseries of an inter-regnum, and the inevitably fatal consequences of an elective monarchy, where no steps were taken to provide a new King till after the death of his predecessor, were too obvious, because too certainly felt, not to be a prominent object of their deliberations. As this point had formed a material part of the negotiation with Prussia, and had served as a sort of basis to the Treaty, it was proposed, in the project of the new government, to confine the right of election to certain dynasties or families. On this article, long and warm debates arose, which at last terminated by the adoption of three resolutions—1st, To avoid the immediate dangers of an inter-regnum, by naming the successor of the reigning King during his lifetime—2d, To chuse as this successor the Elector of Saxony—3d, To adopt a plan for pursuing a similar course in future; and, by avoiding the possibility of an inter-regnum, to secure the stability of their government.

The several palatinates of the kingdom, having been assembled on the 16th of November, unanimously conferred the Crown, immediately on the demise of the reigning monarch, on the Elector of Saxony, who was to take it as eventual successor. With regard to the other point, of confining the right of election to certain dynasties
or

or families, their sentiments were more divided. Many of them expressly recommended it as a measure of great expediency; some entirely rejected it; and the greater part of the assembly, steering between these two opinions, contented themselves with expressing a sincere wish for the adoption of such measures, as should most effectually consolidate and strengthen the new constitution they were forming.

The opinions of the nation having thus been publicly and authentically ascertained, much diligence was used by all parties to perfect the great work they had in hand. On the 3d of May 1791, an entire unanimity of voices, arising from an unanimous national sentiment, proclaimed the New Constitution. It was grounded on the plan agreed upon between Prussia and the Republic; which had formed the basis of their Treaty; of which a printed synopsis had been circulated for more than nine months; and of which no one, at all conversant with the politics of Europe, could have been ignorant. The Poles, indeed, appeared to have taken peculiar pains to give the greatest publicity possible to every step of this important transaction. They felt assured of the support of Prussia; and they were sensible that the embarrassment of Russia left them nothing

thing to apprehend from her. They therefore industriously proclaimed, both their intentions, and their mode of carrying them into execution; and they did what they could, to render it impossible for those interested in the business they were carrying on, to pretend that any part of it had been concealed from them. Their theory was certainly just; but they had not then learned with what contempt the counsellors of Prussia could treat the evidence of their senses, when a change of circumstances should induce a change of conduct.

ALFRED,

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

SIR,

THE period of such a change as I have alluded to was, however, not yet arrived; nor did it appear that the court of Berlin apprehended, that any alteration in the system of Europe was likely to occur, by which it might be induced to forego the great and lasting advantages, which appeared so evidently resulting from the steps now taken by the Republic. The Rubicon, with regard to Russia, had been passed; the influence of the Empress had been annihilated; from her well-known character, and from the nature of her councils, a settled and formidable resentment was to be expected, the effects of which Poland could obviate only by a close and intimate connexion with Prussia.

All this presented to his Prussian Majesty a prospect the most favourable to his wishes.--- Secure of his alliance with England and Holland—having acquired a new ally in Poland, devoted
to

to him by every principle of gratitude, and every tie of interest; with the near view of increasing this connexion by the accession of Saxony; and with an influence in Turkey, which, though shaken by recent transactions, was still greater than that of any other Power—nothing seemed to oppose his great design of standing supreme on the Continent of Europe, and of balancing the relative strength and preponderance of his ambitious neighbours. Seldom, indeed, has the theory of princes been so well-founded. Little of it appeared to be left to chance. With hardly an effort on his own side, he had been led, by a succession of fortunate events, to a situation of prosperity and power, scarcely to be paralleled in modern history; and nothing remained for him, but to improve and to enjoy the mighty blessings which a favourable fortune had put within his reach.

Aware of this happy conjuncture of events, and depending on the concurrence of Saxony in a plan which had already been fully communicated to her by Prussia, and to every step of which she had consented, his Polish Majesty lost no time in communicating officially, to the King of Prussia and the Elector, the act of the 3d of May. The intelligence was received by both of them in the most favourable manner. When the Polish minister, in a private audience, delivered his master's

ter's letter to the Prussian Monarch, his Majesty expressed himself in the most favourable and flattering terms, approving both of the revolution, and of the manner in which it had been conducted. Not satisfied with this mark of his approbation and concurrence, he went beyond the line of etiquette, and exerted himself to put upon record the sentiments and wishes which arose in his mind, on the completion of a transaction which had originated on his immediate suggestion, and from which he expected to derive the most permanent advantage. He sent a dispatch to Count Goltz, his chargé d'affaires at Warsaw, detailing and enforcing these sentiments in a manner the most honourable to his feelings, and the most expressive of the interest he took in the completion of a work, the foundation of which had been laid by himself, and which was so materially to promote the interests which were nearest to his heart. This dispatch, which was read in the full Diet of the Polish Nation, and of which a copy was officially delivered to the King, has become, in consequence of the events which have since taken place, a state paper of the highest and most general importance. It proves what reliance may be had on the good faith, the honour, and the probity of a despotic Prince, who has no other law but his will, no other check but that of his immediate interest, and whose ministers are not responsible

sponsible to the collected representatives of their fellow-citizens, for the folly or the wickedness of their administration.

Feeling, as we all must do, the invaluable blessing of a different government, and feeling too the honest indignation which must arise in every breast, from reflecting on the unworthy fate which has attended the efforts of a generous nation struggling for freedom, I shall beg leave to give this dispatch at length, as an appendix to this letter.

Having now brought down the history of the Republic to the beginning of the summer 1791, I shall, consistently with my plan, leave it for a while in the enjoyment of its transitory prosperity, and proceed with my Review of the History of the remaining European Powers down to the same period.

ALFRED.

THE

*THE DISPATCH FROM THE KING OF PRUSSIA TO
BARON GOLTZ,*

REFERRED TO IN THE PRECEDING LETTER.

J'AI reçu votre Dépêche du 3 Mai, avec son Apostille; et j'ai appris par la dernière l'importante nouvelle que la Diète de Pologne vient d'élire et de proclamer l'Electeur de Saxe, pour successeur éventuel au Trône de Pologne, et qu'elle en a assuré la succession à ses descendans mâles, et, au défaut de ceux ci, à la Princesse sa fille, et au futur epoux que l'Electeur de Saxe et les Etats lui choisiront. D'après le vif intérêt que j'ai toujours pris au bonheur de la Republique, et à l'affermissement de sa nouvelle constitution—intérêt dont je n'ai cessé de lui donner des preuves convaincantes dans toutes les occasions où cela a dépendu de moi—j'applaudis parfaitement à la démarche decisive que la nation vient de faire, et que je regarde comme infiniment propre à consolider sa félicité. La nouvelle m'en a été d'autant plus agréable, que je suis attaché par les liens d'amitié au Prince vertueux destiné à faire le bonheur de la Pologne, et que sa maison l'est à la mienne par ceux de bon voisinage et de la plus heureuse union. Je suis donc persuadé, que ce choix de la Republique affirmera pour jamais l'harmonie et étroite intelligence, qui a subsisté jusqu' à présent entre elle et moi; et je vous charge d'en témoigner, de la façon la plus expresse, mes sincères félicitations au Roi, aux Marechaux de la Diète, et à tous ceux qui ont contribué à ce grand Ouvrage.

TRANS.

TRANSLATION OF THE PRECEDING.

I HAVE received your dispatch of the 3d of May, together with its postscript; and have learnt by the latter, the important intelligence, that the Diet of Poland has elected and proclaimed the Elector of Saxony eventual successor to the Throne of Poland, and that it has secured the succession to his heirs male, and, in default of them, to the Princess his daughter, and such future husband as the Elector of Saxony and the States should chuse for her. From the lively interest I have always taken in the prosperity of the Republic, and in the strengthening of its new constitution—an interest, of which I never have ceased to give it the most convincing proofs, on every occasion when it depended upon me to do so—I perfectly applaud the decisive step which the nation has just taken, and which I consider as infinitely proper to consolidate its felicity. This intelligence has been more agreeable to me, as I am attached by the ties of friendship to the virtuous Prince who is destined to make Poland happy, and as his house is attached to mine by those of good neighbourhood and the most happy union. I am therefore persuaded, that this choice of the Republic will for ever confirm the harmony and strict intelligence which has subsisted to the present moment between it and myself: and I charge you to notify, in the most express terms, my sincere congratulations to the King, to the Marshals of the Diet, and to all those who have contributed to the completion of this great work.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

SIR,

THE accession of Joseph II. to the Imperial Throne, was considered by those, who pretended to know best his character and abilities, as an event which naturally led to an increase of the glory and resources of the House of Austria, already enormously great, whether we consider the situation and extent of the provinces under its dominion, or the alliances and family ties, by which its relative connexions with the rest of Europe were strengthened. Educated by a fond but severe mother; compelled to suppress the natural tendencies of his disposition, and unable to give scope to the workings of his ardent imagination, the restraint under which he passed so many years of his life, contributed to the establishment of a reputation, which gradually diminished as he became a free agent, and which, unfortunately for himself, and for the people he governed, lived not to accompany him to the tomb.

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When Joseph, at the death of the Empress Queen, succeeded to the hereditary dominions, he saw before him a prospect of great and increasing prosperity. The three important States of Bohemia, Hungary and Austria, formed a compact and powerful dominion, rich, flourishing and improving. The loss of Silesia had been, in some degree, made good by the acquisition of the large part of Poland which adjoined his hereditary dominions. The remoter provinces of Flanders and Milan were peaceable and prosperous. By the marriage of two sisters to the Kings of France and Naples, his union with the House of Bourbon had been cemented, and, consequently, the attainment of all the advantages to be derived from the well-known Treaty of 1756 had been facilitated. At peace with all the world, he enjoyed the confidence and friendship of Russia; while his neighbour the Turk, exhausted by a long and ruinous war, had neither the interest nor the ability to recommence hostilities. His treasures, his commerce, and his resources, were every day increasing. His subjects appeared to be attached to him, equally as a man and as a sovereign. His reputation was high throughout Europe. His ardour in the pursuit of military duties, his indefatigable attention to the state and welfare of his armies, his upright administration of justice,

justice, his universal courtesy, and the benevolent condescension with which he tempered the austerity of command, were the themes of panegyric both at home and abroad. He appeared born to realize the idea of a patriot king, and to transplant to the throne the united virtues of every order of men.

It would seem not to have been difficult to have maintained a character thus acquired, and to have improved the advantages resulting from so favourable a prepossession. A short experience, however, sufficed to prove the little reliance which could be had on such flattering appearances. In proportion as he became known as a sovereign, the talents he had manifested as a prince appeared to diminish.—His military ardour was converted into the trifling minuteness of an adjutant; while his political acuteness degenerated into narrow and undignified craft. No longer adored as the father and friend of his country, he saw successively, in almost every part of his dominions, the discontents and miseries of his subjects ripen into rebellion. While he was engaged in a ruinous and unjust war with Turkey, the weak and unprincipled system he had pursued at home raised every where the flame of opposition to a despotism, to which a weak vanity of imitating his Prussian rival had given birth, but which

he had not the mind of a Frederick to maintain and improve.

He flew from province to province, carrying with him oppression and tyranny, and retiring with disappointment, hatred, and contempt. Austria and Bohemia raised high the voice of complaint: in Hungary, the generous spirit of an injured people prompted them to more vigorous exertions: while in Flanders, an accumulation of wrongs drove his subjects to erect the standard of revolt, and to throw off a yoke, the weight and severity of which they were no longer able to bear. Exhausted by foreign war, threatened with new and greater calamities at home, having outlived his reputation, and disappointed every hope which the partiality of mankind had formed in his favour; with a mind broken down by misfortune, and a body worn out and exhausted by disease, he lingered for a while, the object of mingled pity and disapprobation, and died an awful example of the abuse of talents and of power, which, if otherwise employed, or if supported by prudence and moderation, might have rendered him a great and happy prince, the friend of humanity, the idol of the present age, and the model of that which is to come.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XV.

SIR,

SUCH, as I have described it, was the situation of the Austrian dominions, when Leopold the Second was called, by the death of his brother, to fill the Imperial Throne. From his narrow Tuscan dominion, where a single province had been the limit of his tranquil sovereignty, and where a regulation of domestic police, or the management of a petty impost, had been the utmost effort of his councils, he plunged at once into a sea of troubles, and assumed an empire, exhausted of resources, torn with discontents, involved in foreign and domestic wars, and of which one of the best and richest provinces no longer acknowledged itself to be a part. Industrious kept in ignorance of the state of the dominions to which he now succeeded, unacquainted with the people who were become his subjects, and with the ministers by whose advice he was to govern, he took the reins with every apparent disadvantage.

There were, however, some circumstances to counterbalance the many difficulties with which he was thus surrounded. The Turks, drained of men and money, and driven to the greatest distresses by the united arms of the two Imperial Courts, were no longer able to sustain a contest which, on almost every occasion, proved unfavourable to them. They of course longed ardently for peace; and their wishes were strongly seconded by the formidable alliance of England, Holland and Prussia, the two former of which exerted every influence of negotiation to conclude the Eastern war, while the latter added to persuasions the formidable threat, of employing on the side of the Turks his great and well appointed army, to enforce his proposition of concluding the contest.

The terms, held out by these three Powers, were not indeed the most pleasing to the two Imperial Courts. A status quo, or the entire restitution of every thing which had been taken by their armies, was not a flattering termination of so many victorious and bloody campaigns; nor was it perhaps altogether decorous, for mighty monarchs to be driven by threats to a measure, which nothing but fear and weakness could have made them adopt. Between inevitable mischiefs it is well if we have a choice; and he is a prudent man

man who can always determine which is the least. In this case, the decision was obvious; nor could it admit of a moment's doubt, under the circumstances in which Leopold was placed, that the disgrace and loss of the status quo were infinitely less ruinous, than the immediate consequences of drawing upon his dominions, where every thing was in a state of ferment and confusion, a new and powerful enemy, whose resources were untouched, and whose forces, so often tantalized with the hopes of action, longed for the moment when they might be allowed to change the parade for the field.

There was also another, and an equally forcible reason, for accepting the terms thus held out to him. A prolongation of the war, and still more, the accession of a new enemy, would have made it impossible for him to recover the dominion of Flanders, and would have afforded a favourable opportunity to his other discontented provinces, of throwing off the Austrian yoke. Leopold saw these dangers in their full extent, and determined to save himself from them, by abandoning the enterprize into which his brother had followed the Empress of Russia.

The Austrian and Prussian Monarchs accordingly met at Reichenbach. The alternative of

peace with Turkey, or of war with Prussia, was proposed. Fortunately for the cause of humanity, and for the preservation of the tranquility of Europe, the subject they discussed had not been brought forward as a question of party in the British House of Commons: it had not been seized upon by an opposition leader, as a means of rising into power: no councils had been held upon it at a dark and midnight hour, with the Imperial Minister resident in London: no Ambassador had been sent by any party to Vienna, with promises of assistance and support. Single and unassisted, the new Emperor concluded a peace. He became relieved from the burden and the dangers of a Turkish war; the subjects of Austria were allowed to rest from their fatal task of blood; the immediate danger which threatened the tranquility of Europe, was terminated; and the conclusion of an amicable arrangement was allowed to pass, without the ceremony of placing the Bust of an English Demagogue between those of Cicero and Demosthenes.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XVI.

SIR,

IN the character of Leopold, however, were to be found the great and decided advantages, which were to counterbalance the disastrous circumstances under which he took the Imperial Crown. He possessed the rare and almost peculiar felicity, of having for many years been accustomed to the management of public affairs, without having in any degree disclosed the nature of his talents, or the tendency of his disposition. He had lived at Florence, the father, the friend, and even the companion of his people. At a distance from the busy and intricate scene of political intrigue, his conduct of negotiations had not been tried, nor had any opportunity occurred of criticizing his military abilities. Attentive to the minutest details of government; strenuous in his endeavours to reform what he conceived to be domestic abuses; equitable and frugal, though sometimes capricious and severe; he had acquired the reputation of a worthy man, whose heart was better than his head; whose integrity and honour might

might be depended upon, but whose talents were inadequate to the arduous encounter of rival cabinets, where a superiority of intellectual powers was so frequently manifested over the nobler workings of candour and virtue.

Under such a mask, and to be developed only by a succession of events, did the character of Leopold appear. As those events occurred, and they did so with a rapidity scarcely equalled in the annals of history, his real features were gradually disclosed. Supple and accommodating to the circumstances of the moment; rapidly embracing the causes and the consequences of things; strenuous where he perceived the weakness or the apprehensions of his antagonist, and yielding with address to a superior power; prodigal of his promises, and unbounded in his concessions, but ever reserving some secret opening for evasion; he boldly entered into the lists of political intrigue, and dared to measure his weapons with tried diplomatic champions. Perfectly aware of the vantage ground on which he stood, and sheltering himself behind the mistaken character which he had brought with him into Germany, he gave free scope to the latent powers of his mind.

To compose the ferment of his own dominions; to retrieve the losses, and to prevent the consequences

quences of a ruinous war; to fortify himself by new alliances, and to increase his territory and resources, were the great and multifarious objects which at once engrossed his attention. We have seen how he succeeded. Submitting to the power of Prussia, and appearing to yield to a hard necessity, he made his peace with Turkey, and obtained the means of carrying all his other points. He appeased the angry murmurs of his Hungarian subjects, and quieted the discontents of Bohemia and Austria. He employed the mediation of England, Holland and Prussia, to effect a reunion with his Belgic Provinces; but took especial care, in spite of their united circumspection, to leave an opening in his Treaty, by which he might evade every circumstance which tended to limit or to cripple his renovated dominion. He strengthened his alliance with Russia, and formed a new one with the Court of Berlin. He set on foot a crusade against France, giving the law to Prussia, to whose dictates he had so lately submitted, and assuming to himself the conduct and the governance of the great machine which was to be employed for the restitution of the French Monarchy. He converted the barren and frightful prospect which presented itself to him at his accession, into a fair and fruitful scene of actual prosperity and increasing welfare. If the integrity of his heart was impeached, the qualities of his head

head were acknowledged. He had reversed the ordinary course of things; for he repaired the damage which his dominions had received, in less than a quarter of the time which had been taken to effect it. He did all this, and had already laid the foundation for doing much more, within one year from his quitting Florence.

The surrounding nations, spectators of the passing events, yet scarcely recovered from the astonishment into which a transformation so little looked for had thrown them, appeared, at the period to which this Review is at present limited, to look with eager curiosity at the next steps which were to be taken by this political phenomenon; who had suddenly started up a statesman, as it were by intuition, and whose early successes seemed to foretell a long succession of great and interesting events, in which the existing systems of Europe were materially to be involved.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XVII.

SIR,

THERE is no one so ignorant of the History of Europe, as not to know the obligations under which the United Provinces have been to England, since the first moment they threw off the yoke of Spain. In spite of its complicated and inconvenient government, and notwithstanding the restless ambition of its neighbours, the Dutch Republic has continued, for more than two hundred years, to maintain its independence and prosperity, and to shew to other countries the innumerable advantages, resulting from the wisdom of internal regulations and general œconomy, combined with activity and spirit, in the conduct of public affairs. The sagacity of its early rulers pointed out to them the policy of a strict connexion with this country, and induced them to cultivate as intimate an union with us, as the occasional rivalry of particular interests, or the accidental bias arising from a temporary prevalence of weak or wicked councils, would permit. It was easily perceived, whenever such occasional interruptions

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of the connexion between the two countries occurred, that the only certain consequence of them was the weakening and impoverishing of them both. The union of two such maritime powers necessarily placed them high in the scale of Europe; and, as it removed those causes of competition which might have ended to their mutual prejudice, the rulers of both countries (when no trifling temptations led them to a contrary line of conduct) invariably adopted the wise plan of maintaining and improving the alliance.

Unhappily for either country, the interest of the moment has more than once misled them. The wisdom of politicians, like the wisdom of ordinary men, is too often subject to the influence of extrinsic causes. Dazzled by imaginary splendour, or captivated by the hope of immediate advantage, the rulers of a state are sometimes led to overlook the plain and direct road which leads to prosperity and safety.

From such a curse Great Britain and Holland have not been free. The rivalry of concurring interests—the competition for superiority of wealth or power—the mad ambition of their rulers, have, at different times, operated unhappily to produce a breach between them. The consequences were natural and obvious—too late repentant,

pentant, they retired from the contest with diminished fleets and treasures; and, while their own influence in the scale of Europe was weakened, that of their natural enemies proportionably increased. The wisdom of ages, however, had failed to impress upon the Republic this important truth. Sufferer as she had been from repeated instances of folly, we have seen the temptation of immediate profit urge her into a war with England, forgetful of her dearest interests, and unconscious of the certain ruin which must await herself, had the arms of her combined enemies succeeded in reducing Great Britain to the situation of a subaltern Power. Fortunately for us both, the phrenzy, which had led her to engage in this extravagant enterprize, soon gave way to cooler reason. The power of England was not depressed. Her innate vigour enabled her to rise with fresh activity and spirit from her temporary declension. Infinite in her resources, and governed by wise and steady councils, she rose again to the summit of influence and power. Peaceable and happy herself, she saw with mild compassion the torn and distracted state of her recent enemy; she remembered their former friendship; she weighed the innumerable advantages of ensuring the continuance of future harmony and union. Superior to revenge, and disdaining the paltry consideration of profiting by
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any share in her spoils, she nobly stood forth the friend and protector of Holland. Combining with Prussia against the arts and power of France, their united arms restored the liberty and independence of the Republic. The hydra of faction was subdued; the insidious arts of the Court of Paris, to enslave and subject the Dutch nation, were defeated; the power of the Stadtholder, and the energy of the government, were restored; and an intimate defensive alliance between the two Monarchs, and the people whom they had preserved, produced that new and admirable system, which gave a turn to the politics of Europe, and raised the united nations to an influence and power, to which, in the proudest and most brilliant periods of their existence as independent states, they never yet had reached.

In the course of this Review, an occasion of entering more fully into this interesting subject will not be wanting. For my present purpose, it is sufficient to have stated, that, such as I have described it, was the situation of Holland at the beginning of the summer 1791. That her intimate union and alliance with England and Prussia is essentially material to the interests, and, perhaps, to the political existence, both of herself and of them, is a proposition of which I cannot entertain a doubt; nor am I less convinced, that no
other

other possible combination of powers can be attended with such great and reciprocal advantages. These, I know, are articles of political faith which many modern statesmen have disputed. Happily for us all, the doctrines, I believe, are still the doctrines of our rulers. Orthodox in politics, as in religion, our ministers abhor all innovation in both: and every true Englishman must rejoice in the reflection, that the glorious causes they have supported, have so successfully withstood every effort which faction yet has made to overturn them.

ALFRED.

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LETTER

LETTER XVIII.

SIR,

THOUGH a recent event, which raised the glory, and ensured the mercantile interests of England, had brought forward into action the unwieldy and phlegmatic Monarchy of Spain; and though, on that occasion, a momentary appearance of vigour, which soon, however, subsided into concession and submission, shewed a semblance of energy long unknown to the councils of that nation, we must not expect to meet with any great remains of her reputation in the modern Spanish character. That romantic and generous valour which inspired her armies; that virtuous ardour which led her to conquest and to fame; that candid integrity which raised her above the ordinary necessity of specific contracts and attested obligations—these are all vanished with her national glory, her political sagacity, and her preponderance in the general system of Europe.

Possessed of the noblest and most fertile kingdom on the continent; extending their almost
exclusive

exclusive empire over half the Western Hemisphere; monopolizing the sources of European wealth, and courted as it were, at once by nature and by fortune, the Kings of Spain, submissive to the ties of blood, have bowed to the superior influence of their parent-stock, and have condescended to pay an implicit obedience to the dictates of the Gallic Court. What they or their subjects may have gained by that confederacy which has been termed the Family Compact, is a secret which none but themselves can discover. The losses and disgraces which have accrued to them from it, are fresh in our memory: never can the remembrance of them be obliterated, while the names of Elliot and Rodney adorn our annals, or while Gibraltar and Nootka Sound form parts of the British Empire.

At the period to which my present inquiry is limited, the depression and embarrassments of Spain were particularly conspicuous. Obligated by the energy of our councils, and by the conviction of the certain ruin which must follow the operations of our resistless force, she had stipulated to indemnify the injured individuals who had suffered from the illegal conduct of her officers; she had submitted to ask pardon for the insult she had offered to the Majesty of England; she had renounced her arrogant pretension to the exclusive

navigation and commerce of the American Seas; she had given up the single security which she had till then been suffered to retain for her immense American possessions; and, at the only moment when the effect of her compact with France was essential to her salvation, the disordered and enfeebled state of that unhappy country prevented her from deriving any assistance from it. The daring enterprize which her subservience to French councils had led her to commence, ended in her confusion and disgrace; and these sensations had scarcely been qualified by the reflection on the narrow escape she had had from immediate destruction, when the change of the political system of France took from her the only remaining prop, from which, however frail and unsubstantial, she had flattered herself she might find support. With the power of the French King, the Family Compact was annihilated. The new rulers of France, when they abolished monarchy and law, broke through every bond of union which had been cemented with foreign powers. Resolved to exhibit a new political system of their own, they began with renouncing every friend, and provoking every enemy. In proportion as the connexion was advantageous to their country, they accelerated its destruction; and their velocity in dissolving alliances seemed to proceed in a direct ratio of their importance, and

and of their tendency to increase the influence and power of the kingdom, the direction of which they had usurped. The operation of the Family Compact, however doubtful its advantages might be to Spain, had been long favourable to the interests of France. It had secured to her an ally attached to her by family prejudices, and subservient to her will. It had enabled her to cope with the marine of England, and to sustain a rivalry, which of course exalted her to a pre-eminent station among the Powers of Europe. It had never obliged her to any exertion, or subjected her to any expence; but it had supplied her with resources, and with force, to maintain the enterprises which, without them, must have ended in her defeat and ruin. The National Assembly of France, in its first paroxysm of political fury, disdained considerations so unworthy of Statesmen who acted on the novel principles they had adopted. They annihilated that compact which their more sober predecessors had so fondly cherished; they defied the Spanish power, which those had so studiously cultivated; and, having thus got rid of Spain as an ally, they sent into her provinces an host of Apostles, to disseminate among her subjects the doctrine of the Rights of Man, to stir them up to anarchy and rebellion, and to execute on the Spanish branch of Bourbon those cruel in-

dignities, which they had begun to exercise on the head of that family.

From a state thus humbled by a recent submission, from which its great and powerful ally had thus been violently torn, and the attention of which was engrossed by domestic intrigues, and the terrors of instant innovation and tumult, much of interest or concern in the general politics of Europe cannot be expected. Little indeed will be found. We have seen her make a feeble and ill-directed effort to interfere in the arrangement of jarring interests; but we have seen her, almost at the moment of her exertion, fall back into her state of public apathy and domestic apprehension, trembling at the breath of faction, and passing in precarious tranquillity and apprehensive solicitude, the scanty moments of peace, which the necessities of her sanguinary neighbours, and not their inclinations, permitted her to enjoy.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XIX.

SIR,

THE inconsiderable figure which Portugal has long made as an European Power, and the little share that kingdom has taken in the great events which have signalized modern times, make it a matter of subaltern importance to enter at any length into a detail of its history. Long have been at an end those brilliant days, when a Vasco de Gama explored new worlds, extending over distant seas and empires, at once the dominion and the glory of his country; in vain, among the Portuguese Princes of our times, do we look for a Don Henri, at once the patron and the hero of every adventurous enterprize. Content to enjoy in security the remnant of those possessions which their predecessors acquired, the modern Monarchs of Portugal have wisely withdrawn themselves from those active scenes, where Powers of greater energy and importance could alone act with effect, and where, had they appeared in any character at

all, it must have been in that of subordination and impotent representation.

With a frontier open to the incursion of Spain, and with an inferiority of force, which perpetually made her liable to an attack, Portugal has long been preserved from again becoming a province of that Monarchy, solely by the jealous watchfulness of other Powers, who could not, without umbrage, see her subjected to the Court of Madrid, already possessed of an extent of sea coast, which wanted nothing but such an addition to make it completely connected and advantageous. At the beginning of the summer 1791, however, a combination of natural causes appeared to prognosticate the speedy approach of such an event, and to hasten at length an union of these two kingdoms, in spite of every precaution which could be taken to prevent it. The mutual intermarriages which had been concluded between the branches of the two Royal Families, the apprehensions which were entertained as to the probability of a succession to the Spanish Throne in the male line, and the state of health of the Prince of Brazil, combined to create a considerable uneasiness in this respect. Though these causes have since ceased to operate so powerfully, they naturally, at the moment to which I allude, occasioned a sensation in both countries. This, added to the recent

cent failure of the Spanish connexion with France, and to the apprehensions which were raised in either kingdom, by the dread of the principles which had occasioned the ferment of that country being transferred into Spain and Portugal, tended to unite and consolidate their interests, and to weaken, if not in a great degree to overcome, the jealousies and suspicions which so long had prevailed between them.

As an ally of Great Britain, Portugal has long possessed advantages which she could not have derived from any other political connexion. Secured from the attack of those powerful States, whose interests and inclinations alike led them to avail themselves of her comparative weakness, she has been enabled to wear her diadem with safety and respect. Nor have the commercial advantages which she has derived from this connexion been less considerable: her European, as well as American productions, have been carried to the constant and liberal market of England, whose consumption and manufactures have employed the industry of her inhabitants, and filled the treasures of her Monarch. From England, indeed, she has never had any thing to dread; while, by her alliance and protection, the causes of dreading any other power have been removed from her. Weak, as she comparatively is, and
defence-

defenceless, the valour and the navies of Britain guarantee her security and independence. Incapable, as she is, of consuming, or of usefully employing, her own productions, the manufactures and superior resources of England take them advantageously off her hands. Without a ground for rivalry, and without an opposing interest, the two kingdoms appear to be drawn together by ties of the strongest natural connexion—those of sound and good policy, by which the strongest nation protects and preserves the weaker—and those of commercial wisdom, by which a liberal and manly spirit of reciprocity maintains the fair exchange between the two countries, and where the hand of industry completes the great design of Providence, by bringing to perfection the rare and inestimable gifts of bounteous nature.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XX.

SIR,

THE small share that Italy has had in those events which have engaged the other Powers of Europe, would have justified me in passing over with very little attention a part of the world, which, however famous in past ages, contains at present hardly any thing to interest the politician, or capable of arresting our attention, when employed in a review of transactions in which so large a portion of the continent is materially concerned. For ages stript of her former dominion and glory, and broken into a number of petty and inconsiderable States, Italy presents to our view little more than an assemblage of subordinate principalities, dignified by varieties of names and governments, and existing less by their own intrinsic force, than by foreign influence, and by the connivance of superior powers.

Of the Italian Princes, the most celebrated and the most redoubtable in former times is now
fallen

fallen low in the scale of European Potentates. The thunders of the Vatican, which long ago ceased to be formidable, are now no longer heard. On the Pontine Marshes, in the clearing and improving of Civita Vecchia, and in the erection of a new Museum, the efforts and the resources of modern Popes have been employed: and the world will undoubtedly agree in the opinion, that the power and the treasures of a Bishop of Rome have thus been exercised at least as advantageously, as if they had been exerted in fulminating Anathemas at the heads of kings, and in fomenting the cause of rebellion and anarchy. Different, indeed, from their vicious and turbulent predecessors, the holy pontiffs of our days have endeavoured to distinguish themselves by moderation, wisdom and virtue. Tacitly acquiescing in the improved knowledge and more enlarged conceptions of mankind, they have imperceptibly receded from the lofty pretensions of those former Popes, who trod on the necks of Emperors, and disposed of kingdoms as their patrimony. In return for such a compliment to the good sense of the world, it is sincerely to be hoped, that their little territory will be left in security and peace; and that no democratical freebooters, insolent from a certainty of non-resistance, and bold from the hope of rapine to be torn from an unresisting and unoffending people, may succeed in despoiling

ing the tranquil seat of ancient magnificence and modern hospitality.

Reigning in the hearts of his people, and assimilated to them by his manners, his disposition and his habits of life, the King of Naples has worn his crown for three and thirty years in peace and prosperity. Remote, by inclination as well as position, from the active scenes of political warfare, and equally free from foreign aggression as from domestic tyranny, the Sicilian King has employed himself in the improvement of his territory and the welfare of his subjects. To the formation of a marine, to the cultivation and civilization of his remoter and semi-barbarous provinces, and to the equal administration of justice throughout his dominions, his cares have been directed; while the object of his foreign policy has been principally the emancipation of himself and his dominions from the mortifying yoke of dependency on the Court of Spain, and the assertion of that free-agency which, as the Sovereign of a fruitful and populous kingdom, he felt himself entitled to claim and to maintain.

The moderation and virtues of the King of Sardinia, the love of peace by which he is so well known to be actuated, and the inconsiderable means he possesses of invading other nations, appear

pear to have been sufficient to entitle him in his advanced age to respect and security, and to have ensured to the conclusion of his paternal reign the prosperity with which so many years of it had been crowned. The fate of this Monarch, however, shews what little dependence can be had on the smiles of fortune; and is an awful lesson, that our greatest imagined blessings may become the means of sorrow and distress. The marriage of his daughters to the brothers of the King of France, however gratifying to him as a politician, or flattering to him as a father, became, by the turn of events in that kingdom, the cause of his distress, and the immediate occasion of the loss of half his dominions. At the moment to which I allude, this worthy Sovereign found himself obliged to receive his children, whom he had sent to imagined happiness and splendour, as outcasts and wanderers; while a state of doubt and suspense prevailed as to his own security, mingled with apprehensions of approaching insults and revolutions, which subsequent experience has but too fatally realized.

In the Dutchy of Tuscany, recently committed to the guidance of a young and inexperienced Prince, and in the Italian dominions of the Emperor, similar doubts and fears invaded their otherwise peaceful and prosperous state; nor were there

there wanting further causes of apprehension, from the contagion of those mad and sanguinary principles, which had started up on the banks of the Seine, and had spread far and wide among the ignorant and discontented rabble. In the neighbouring territory of Genoa, and in the more remote Republic of Venice, the emissaries of Jacobinism had not yet so successfully propagated their senseless and pernicious doctrines. But even there, their efforts were not wanting. From a barbarous and savage spirit of disseminating novel doctrines, and of extending through Europe a crusade of political innovation, no nation was secure, further than as it found itself enabled to oppose force by force, and to repel by arms the incursions of mad and fanatical depredators. We have since seen the extent of their incursions and the consequences of their doctrines. The tempest indeed had not then begun to rage, nor had the lightning blasted so many fair and lovely monuments of peace and civilized society: but the horizon was overcast; black heavy clouds were gathering to obscure the brilliancy of day; and a horrid calm, prophetic of the storm, and lengthened only to augment the horrors of suspense, agitated and depressed the general mind.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XXI

SIR,

THE situation of France has so generally attracted the attention of Europe, and has been discussed in so many shapes, and in so many points of view, that no one, however warped by prejudice or party, can be ignorant of the actual condition of that country at the beginning of the summer 1791. The object of this Review is not to analyse the cause of the strange Revolution which has taken place in that country, the mode in which it has been conducted, or the principles on which it has been justified or condemned. It is enough to say, that a Revolution, which began in 1789, had operated so effectually and generally, that not only the ancient government of France had been completely overthrown, but that no other government had been substituted in its place. That noble and once flourishing kingdom exhibited the astonishing spectacle of a wild and anarchical system, founded on abstract and inapplicable principles, introduced

duced among reasonable creatures as the rule of their conduct, and as the mode of regulating the administration of their affairs.

The phantom of equality, the adoption of senseless phrases and ideal privileges, and the assumption of rights which never existed but in the brains of mad or wicked projectors, had worked on the feeble minds of ignorant and violent men, and led them, through scenes of barbarity and bloodshed, to infamy and misery. Whatever of noble or of great, whatever of illustrious, dignified, or wise, once adorned the Monarchy of France, had now disappeared from her horizon, and sought, in poverty and banishment, that personal security, and that privilege of existing, which those, who arrogated to themselves the title of legislating citizens, cruelly and savagely refused them. These self-created rulers of a torn and distracted country, seizing on the reins of power, shewed to surrounding nations the superior energy of a democratic tyranny, which stood on no other foundation than that of lawless and irresistible force, and the only object of which was the extension of those enormities, and of those violent principles, to which it owed its birth, and by which alone it could be maintained. Blind to the horrors which they had brought upon their country, and insensible of the ruinous consequences which their speculations and violences

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were

were entailing upon it, they insolently trampled on the rights of their king, of their church, of their fellow-citizens, and of every one who refused implicitly to obey their high and arrogant behests. Nor were these outrages upon every right and principle, whether sacred or human, confined to the limits of the miserable country where the tyranny of these legislating bigots had been established. While they sat in close divan at Paris, devising plans for the extension of anarchy, rebellion, sacrilege and atheism, with a wild and phrenetic zeal for the propagation of their destructive doctrines, they dispersed in every region their mischievous apostles. These, with a zeal and constancy deserving of a better cause, laboured without relaxation for the general extinction of law, security, and happiness. They struggled, with pertinacious malevolence, to disseminate in every climate, and in every government, the doctrines which had reduced the French people to the misery and disgrace which had stigmatized them as a nation; and, with a species of malice, which, till it was exemplified by France, was never recorded but of the devil himself, they united for the destruction of every thing which was great, or lovely, or good, and for the equalization of all mankind, in one general level of abomination and depravity.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XXII.

SIR,

THAT the Turks have so long withstood the formidable and repeated attacks made upon them by the Russians and Austrians, can be accounted for solely from the circumstance of these attacks having been carried on against them by land, and upon an extent of frontier on which it was not only difficult to make any very considerable impression, but which, if carried, opened on a country still more impracticable, and upon passes which afforded neither resources nor subsistence to the invader, and where a force, comparatively inferior, might have protracted the war to a ruinous length, or have cut off the best appointed army sent against it. To this single circumstance must it be attributed, that the Turks still continue to exist as an European Power : for the nature of their government seems to carry with it the seeds of decay ; and their military establishments possess no longer the energy and weight, by which the former Princes of the Ottoman

blood extended their conquests and the terror of their name to the gates of Vienna itself.

The European Empire of Turkey, however, though still existing, boasts no longer the extent of dominion which once it possessed. Though the two Imperial Courts have not yet succeeded in their attempts to subvert it, their reiterated attacks have gradually made them masters of many important provinces ; and we have seen them, step by step, extend their frontiers, and improve the facilities of approaching Constantinople itself. Nor has their eagerness to accomplish this important object been at all times confined within those bounds, which can be warranted either by good faith, or by the generally received maxims of fair dealing between state and state. War after war has been commenced, on pretences the most frivolous, and even without any pretence at all. On the part of Russia, in particular, this lawless and unprincipled system has been carried on, with increasing velocity and oppression, from the beginning of this century ; and the conviction entertained by Peter the First, that European Turkey could never be completely subdued, without the previous possession of the coasts of the Black Sea, and the consequent establishment of a navy there, has influenced his successors to repeated violations of treaties, to the

employ-

employment of every artifice which could alienate the minds of the Turkish subjects, and to the grossest acts of violence and rapacity.

This spirit of encroachment lost nothing of its force in the hands of the present Empress. From the moment of her acquiring the sceptre, the fulfillment of the great idea of subjugating the Turkish Empire, and of seating her grandson on the Throne of the Ottomans, engaged her imagination. Her gigantic ambition, unsatiated by her exaltation from a subordinate situation in a petty German principality to a dominion over half the ancient world, panted after visions of new conquests, and still more extended territories. To realize these flattering views, her sagacity pointed out to her the preliminary step of a Southern maritime establishment. By the expulsion of the Turks, and by the seizure of Constantinople alone, was such an establishment to be acquired; and this again was necessarily to be obtained by a previous seizure of the Crimea and of the Circassian and Armenian shores; and by extending the Russian frontier from the Dneiper to the Dneister. Such, as the evidence of a century has shewn us, is the obvious and determined policy of Russia. The Crimea and the Kuban had already been seized. In Circassia and the neighbouring States, every effort was employing to promote rebellion and revolt; and a

powerful fleet was preparing to invade and to subdue the Western and Northern coasts of the Black Sea, as preparatory to the conquest of Constantinople itself; when the Turks, aware of the danger which hung over them, and apprehensive of the inevitable ruin which would ensue from permitting these projects to ripen into effect, felt themselves impelled, after every effort by representation and negociation had failed, to resort to arms, in order to preserve themselves from certain and immediate ruin.

The events of this war are too recent, and too well known, to make it necessary for me to mention them. Successful at first beyond what could have been expected, the Turks at length proved unable to withstand the united force of two such mighty Sovereigns as were leagued together for their destruction. To preserve them as an European Power, the Kings of England and Prussia, who had lamented the causes of the war, and had left no means untried to prevent it from breaking out, found it at length incumbent upon them to stand forward, and to propose their mediation and good offices for the termination of hostilities on fair and equitable grounds. This negociation, as might naturally be expected from a knowledge of the motives and principles of the two Imperial Courts, though respectfully received, was suspended,

ed, or renewed, as circumstances directed; and the allied powers, in the mean time, continued and improved upon their successes,

Tired out at length with the artful and insidious delays which were thrown in the way of his friendly endeavours, and not unconscious of the weight he had now acquired, by the favourable opportunity which the embarrassed situation of his Austrian rival afforded him, of extending his own dominion and power, the King of Prussia changed his mediating tone into that of defiance. He perceived the advantages which must necessarily result, in the progress of his negotiation, from the attention of Russia being seriously engaged by the war with Sweden, and from the embarrassments of the Emperor, in consequence of the diversion occasioned by the revolt in the Low Countries: He therefore lost no time in securing to himself the alliance of Poland; in establishing in that Republic an ascendancy and influence; and in the conclusion of a treaty with the Porte, by which he engaged, in case the Imperial Courts should persist in their system of aggression, to operate powerfully in their behalf, whenever the season should admit of military operations. Nor were his exertions on this occasion less strenuous than his engagement had been encouraging to the Turks. Early in the spring of 1790, he brought a formidable

dable army into the field, sufficient at once to secure his own frontier, and to alarm the new Emperor, who had succeeded to the exhausted and distracted dominions of his brother, but who, fortunately for the cause of humanity and good policy, did not inherit his wild and ill-judging ambition. His wiser councils prompted him to the adoption of peace; and he consented, by the convention of Reichenbach, to a suspension of hostilities, and to the opening of a negotiation for a definitive treaty of peace at Sistovo, on the ground of the status quo, or the restitution of all the conquests he had acquired by the war.

Having thus succeeded in relieving the Turks from one of their formidable enemies, the allied courts continued their mediatory efforts on the side of Russia. A similar proposal was made by them to the Empress; who, while on one hand she listened to the proposals of peace, continued on the other her most strenuous efforts to harrass and destroy the Turks, who became daily less able to withstand her force, and upon whom the Russian armies exercised every species of the most savage and horrid barbarity, in the hope of breaking their spirits, and of compelling them to make a peace upon the most ignominious terms.

Such

Such was the actual situation of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the year 1791.—The course of this narrative will quickly lead me to a further discussion of the eventful business, in which England became a principal actor ; and in which, had the eyes of the public been open to their real interests, and had not the machinations of an unprincipled faction among us been employed to counteract the wise and honest efforts of our ministers, the glory and lasting prosperity of our country would have been ensured, and the general system of Europe would have been preserved from the danger, to which it was left exposed from the ambitious designs of Russia.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XXIII.

SIR,

HAVING thus taken a review of the different countries of Europe, and shewn the situations in which they respectively stood at the commencement of the summer 1791, it is with peculiar satisfaction that I feel myself at liberty to turn my eyes towards our own country, which, at the same period, appeared to surrounding nations the mild but strenuous arbiter of Europe, unequalled in prosperity and resources, enjoying the purest and most perfect government which had ever blessed a people, and profiting by the arts of peace, while she possessed and knew how to use the most irresistible means of war.

In attributing this prosperity and happiness to the good conduct and talents of those ministers, whom His Majesty, at the end of the year 1783, thought proper to entrust with the management of public affairs, we do no more than re-echo the public voice, and repeat the just eulogium of a
grateful

grateful people, founded on an experience of nine years. Indeed, when we consider what was the situation of this country at the first of these periods, and when we contrast it with the state in which it stood at the latter, little argument is necessary to prove how justly this general opinion was founded.

Without entering into a discussion of the causes which had reduced this country to the calamitous state we all know it to have been in at the end of the year 1783—a discussion foreign to my immediate purpose, and happily rendered unnecessary, by the signal change which has since occurred in our circumstances—without commenting upon the weakness and imprudence of that administration which involved us in the American war, or upon the motives and conduct of those who constituted that strange and anomalous monster the Coalition; it will be sufficient to mention the principal effects of the measures that had been adopted, which had lowered Great Britain in the scale of nations, and which threatened consequences still more humiliating and ruinous.

An empty Exchequer, and exhausted resources—a credit shaken and diminished—the public funds at a discount of six and forty per cent. and government obliged to borrow at near six per cent.

cent. when individuals could obtain money by paying an interest of only five—our colonies dismembered, after an useless expence of more than an hundred millions, and after the loss of thousands of our best and bravest citizens—the commerce of our country universally shattered, and in many instances almost annihilated—the flame of discontent raging generally at home, while associations, the most daring and dangerous, were every where forming against the government—our national glory eclipsed, while not a single continental alliance presented even the hope of future influence or assistance :—these were some of the consequences resulting from the conduct of those who had directed the affairs of our country at home, combined with the hostile efforts of a host of avowed and secret enemies abroad.

To survey a picture like this, which is far from being over-charged, cannot be agreeable to the feelings of an Englishman : it was, however, necessary for me to sketch it lightly, in order to contrast it with the situation of Great Britain at the beginning of the summer 1791 ; and that, by comparing our relative state at those periods, the people of England, to whom I address myself, may be enabled, not only to appreciate the existence and the causes of their actual prosperity, but to determine on the degree of merit to be attributed

buted to those, by whose councils and exertions so favourable a change had been effected. It is the duty of the people to do this. Their personal interests and political existence depend on the integrity and talents of those, to whom His Majesty commits the conduct of affairs. Nominated by the crown, ministers instantly become responsible to their fellow-citizens for the honest and able discharge of the trust reposed in them. Their conduct ought sedulously to be watched; no blind partiality to one set of men, no prejudiced resentment against another, ought to influence the national opinion; but, by bringing their measures to the touchstone of experience, censure or approbation should be conferred upon them, accordingly as they may have deserved either. From the opinion I entertain of the present ministers, I think they cannot wish for a fairer test of the services they have rendered to their country.

Let us therefore, briefly pursuing a line similar to that which I took in the former instance, consider how far the several points already enumerated had, or had not, been amended since the appointment of the present administration.

For the prosperous state of our finances, and the flourishing condition of our resources, at the beginning of the summer 1791, no farther proofs
are

are necessary, than those which naturally must strike every one who looks at what is passing, or who listens to the general conversation of mankind. More than eight millions of our national debt had now been paid off—our resources had not only recovered their tone and energy, but had improved, in a proportion which neither the abasement to which they had fallen, nor the shortness of the time which had elapsed, rendered probable. Our revenue, particularly in the years immediately preceding the period in question, had increased rapidly; and the sources from which it arose appeared so vigorous, as to justify a belief, which has since been realized, that it was susceptible, in those hands which had the management of it, of still greater augmentation. Our public funds, in consequence of the riches which sprung from the general prosperity, were risen more than forty per cent.; so that the proportion which had subsisted between public and private credit, was now inverted; and, had a necessity of borrowing occurred, an interest of three and a half per cent. would have been the utmost which could have been expected from government. By a judicious system introduced into every branch of financial regulation, the loss of the American colonies was more than compensated to us. The nation appeared to have derived fresh strength and vigour from the separation. Relieved from the weight of main-
taining

taining and defending such distant possessions, the superiority of our manufactures and navigation, added to the solvency and good faith of our merchants, had thrown into our hands the greater part of the trade of that extensive continent. The commercial treaty with France had opened to us a vast field of new and valuable commerce, which had been sedulously pursued, and from which immense advantages had been derived; and the convention concluded with Spain, in the year 1790, had already engaged the attention of the active citizens of this country, who were emulously embarking on a new course of profit and enterprise. In every other part of the globe our commerce flourished, and the flag of Gréat Britain rode triumphantly from the coasts of China to those of North West America. The flame of discontent no longer raged among us; for the people of England, sensible of the blessings they enjoyed under a free constitution and a mild government, had no wish and no interest to try experiments with either.

The emancipation of Holland from the yoke of France in 1787, and the alliances which were afterwards formed with that country and Prussia, had given us a weight and influence on the continent, which this country, in its most prosperous times, had never known. This was of course increased

creased by the tumultuous and distracted state of France, whose exhausted finances, and internal commotions, prevented her from taking that part in the affairs of Europe, which her intriguing politics, and the ascendancy she had acquired by her family connexions, and her treaties with Austria and Spain, had once enabled her to assume. By an interference of the three combined powers, as dignified as it was effectual, the Swedes had been saved from the invasion of Denmark; and the force of Austria had been withdrawn from that of Russia, at the moment when their combined armies appeared to threaten the entire destruction of the Ottoman Empire in Europe.

Such was the state of England at the beginning of the summer 1791. The recollection of the public will easily add to this brief statement of our prosperity and glory; upon which, however flattering, the nature of the present Review forbids me to dwell with that minuteness, which the importance of the subject, and the interest which, as citizens of this great empire, we all must feel in it, would otherwise induce me to do. It is, indeed a proud consideration, that, on concluding the survey of Europe, I am enabled to look on our own island in a light so grateful to my feelings; to see her rich, flourishing, powerful and happy; while other nations were exhausted and distressed,

distressed, worn out with foreign wars, or torn with intestine commotions. Who is there among us who feels the blessings we enjoy, and contrasts them with the miseries which other nations suffer, whose heart does not expand with gratitude to the kind providence, which has thus selected us as its favourite children, and placed us in a country which possesses the vast and exclusive enjoyment of every blessing, which can be derived from monarchy untinged with oppression, and from liberty uncontaminated by licentiousness !

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XXIV.

SIR,

THE concise view which I have given in my preceding letters, of the situation of the several European Powers as they stood at the end of the spring 1791, will, I trust, have communicated to such of my readers, as may not have been within the reach of authentic information upon that subject, a tolerably distinct idea of the actual state of each country. There yet remains to me a further task, before I shall have accomplished the object I had in view.

At a moment like the present, when all Europe may be considered as one great political machine, the knowledge of every separate spring or wheel, which contributes to set it in motion, is not sufficient to give us a just idea of their combined effect: we ought to investigate, so far as we are able, the relative strength and weakness of each component power; we ought to consider the several causes, which have operated to produce the effects under which so great a portion of the continent

continent now labours, that we may be enabled, in some degree, to pierce through the mist which at present involves the fate of the several Powers implicated in the passing events, and, if possible, to calculate the probable consequences of the convulsions which have agitated so large a portion of Europe. I trust, that it will not be considered as either unnecessary or uninteresting, to deduce, as shortly as possible, the history of those leading events and interests, to which the existing situation both of Great Britain and the surrounding Powers may be attributed.

As it will far exceed the limits of my present plan, to attempt to write a History of European Politics during the period to which I have alluded—an attempt impossible to be realized, without information to which but few can pretend to have access—the object of my following letters will be to develop in some degree those great and leading interests, which, amidst the general mass of events that have distinguished the last few years, especially deserve consideration, as having in a great degree influenced and governed the rest, and as being likely to influence and govern the politics of Europe for many years to come. The observation of my readers will have already pointed out to them the great and alarming rise of the power of Russia, whose actual dominion, whose ambi-

ous views, and whose unhopèd-for successes, have already raised her to a height, which it is the interest of England, as well as of those States more immediately her neighbours, to regard with a very fixed and jealous attention. And they will undoubtedly have already concluded, that attention will not be wanting to investigate, as far as possible, the causes and the effects of those new combinations in Europe, by which Powers the most inimical, and whose interests seemed so very opposite, have been united into confederacies, for the accomplishment of projects from which it may not be easy to discover any real advantages to be derived; and where the sudden reverses of fortune, the unexpected mischances on one side, and the equally unlookèd-for successes on the other, render still darker the already obscure prospect, and baffle every calculation which either experience or common sense could have framed.

ALFRED,

LETTER

LETTER XXV.

SIR,

HE who considers the power and plans of Russia, the success of her ambitious views, and the rapid strides she is daily making to an ascendancy which, sooner or later, it must be the united object of the rest of Europe to diminish, cannot be *laudator temporis acti*. It is impossible to approve of that timid and absurd policy, which contributed to raise the Russian Empire to the weight and consequence it now possesses; which put into the hands of Catherine the Second those weapons which she has since so powerfully employed against her benefactors, and which, while she continues to reign, she never will cease to employ for the accomplishment of her vast and gigantic schemes of aggrandizement.

From the general peace of 1763 to the appointment of the present administration in 1783, it seems to have been the common plan of England, Prussia and Austria (however they might differ

in other points) to contribute as far as they could to increase the power of Russia, and to extend her influence from the North, where she could do them little harm, to the South, where she might become their very formidable antagonist. Notwithstanding all the efforts of Peter the First and his successors, the power of Russia had, before this period, extended little beyond the immediate neighbourhood of her dominions ; rude and half-civilized themselves, the Russians fought and conquered their fellow-barbarians of the North. When summer had unfrozen their seas and harbours, they launched their few and unwieldy vessels, for the purposes of ravage and precarious destruction ; but the conclusion of autumn recalled them into port, where they were to lie, useless and decaying, during the dreary continuance of an hyperborean winter. Under such natural disadvantages, and contrasted with nations whose navigation was free during the whole year, it is evident that the maritime power of Russia was feeble in its efforts and unimportant in its effect ; and as, without an alteration in this respect, Russia never could become a preponderant part of the European system, the policy of its rulers was naturally turned to the attainment of a point, on the completion of which the success or failure of all their other plans was ultimately to depend. The mutual jealousy and ill-judged concurrence
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of England and Prussia, combined to produce in favour of Catherine the Second this wished-for effect, and at the same time to forward another of her plans, not less material for the success of her ambitious views, or less important in its consequences to the rest of Europe,

From the moment when Peter the First commenced his reign over the various provinces which formed his unwieldy empire, he conceived the plan of expelling the Turks from Europe, and of adding their valuable dominions to those which he already possessed. He laboured incessantly for the attainment of this object, and spared no pains in attempting to unite the channels of the Wolga and the Don, in order to penetrate through the sea of Azoph into the Black Sea, to form a navy by means of the infinite resources of timber, hemp, and iron, which that part of his country afforded, and thus to attack the Turks in their most important and most vulnerable point. To the Monarchs of such an empire, the expence of treasure and the loss of their subjects are objects of small consideration, when weighed with the attainment of their wishes: and if there be any consolation to be administered to those who are thus sacrificed, it must, I should suppose, be the reflection, that the object in view is not an idle or temporary caprice, but a plan, however unjust, yet great and illustrious, and tending to the ex-

tension of a power, in which they willingly incline to think they have a share of interest.

The plan of Peter had been invariably pursued by his successors ; and, gradually, the empire of Russia was extended over the provinces to the north-east of the Black Sea. When, by the deposition and death of her husband, the present Empress found herself seated on the throne of the Czars, she soon discovered the necessity of employing her subjects on distant and dazzling enterprizes, in order to keep them from dwelling too much on her title and administration. With this view, she recalled to their imaginations the brilliant prospects of her predecessors, their attempts to form a fleet and to destroy the Turkish power, and their efforts to obtain an influence over the commerce and politics of Europe. The slaves of an arbitrary monarchy, accustomed, though Europeans, to the Asiatic system of revolutions and usurpations, quickly lost the remembrance of the mode in which their Sovereign had acquired her power, in the enthusiasm which the magnificence of her projects had raised. A confederacy was quickly formed with Austria, and the combined forces of the two empires commenced the war which afterwards was concluded by the peace of Kainardgi.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XXVI.

SIR,

AT the period mentioned in my preceding letter, no alliance subsisted between England and Russia: indeed, we were then in that forlorn condition which the strange and mistaken policy of the time had reduced us to; we stood alone without a single ally, remote from every concern with the politics of Europe, except those which tended to increase the forces of our rivals, or to diminish our own. A formal alliance of the most intimate nature, however, subsisted between the King of Prussia and the Empress; and it is well known, that he governed Russia as much as he did his own dominions, in consequence of the influence he had obtained over Count Panin. This circumstance had raised the jealousy of the English ministers, and every means in their power were employed by them to counteract him. The natural effect of this contest was the destruction of the political influence of both Powers. The
pene-

penetration of the Empress had enabled her to perceive, that this rivalry might be managed so as to produce the most beneficial consequences in her projected war, without laying her under the necessity of making any concessions in return. She accordingly prevailed upon Prussia to furnish her, as an ally, with every assistance it could afford her, in her aggression against Turkey; and Great Britain, with a species of generosity to which I do not wish to give a name, gratuitously supplied her with officers, seamen, ship-builders, and every kind of aid, by which she was enabled to equip a naval force, such as the reiterated efforts of all the Sovereigns of Russia had never been able to effect. Nor was the disinterested bounty of this country confined to the construction of this maritime force; the ports and hospitality of England were opened to it; the accomplishment of its voyage to the Mediterranean, which otherwise could never have been effected, was owing solely to the assistance it received in the British harbours, where it was allowed to refit, and was supplied with every thing it wanted. And, as if a single instance of generosity to a rival had been insufficient to establish our reputation for good policy and wisdom, a liberal permission, and even encouragement, was given to our naval officers, seamen, and ship-builders, to engage in the Russian service, and to employ their activity and science,

both

both in the Baltic and Black Sea, in the creation of a new maritime power.

The successes of Russia, in this war, are too well known to make it necessary for me to enumerate them. Her fleets, till then unable to penetrate with effect into the Turkish seas, or to cope with the miserable marine of an ignorant and inexperienced people, now rode triumphant within sight of Constantinople, and, under the command of Englishmen, carried with them conquest and triumph. The war ended most favourably for the Imperial allies, and the Empress obtained the important point of the recognition of the independency of the Crimea.

Such was the obligation which Russia owed to England. The humane and moderate Catherine, the natural ally of Great Britain, was not long without an opportunity of proving the grateful sense she entertained of it. The circumstances of this country were shortly after changed. Still without an ally, we had become involved in a long and ruinous war with America; France had joined with her against us; and our exhausted forces appeared little able to sustain us against the host of foes which were combining to attack us. Thus circumstanced, a negociation was set on foot in 1779, in order to have the assistance of a
Russian

Russian squadron; and the spirits of the nation were raised, by the hope of deriving a decided benefit from the marine we had so liberally contributed to form. The Empress did not hesitate to agree to the proposal; and a direct assurance, that the Russian squadron, then ready, should immediately proceed to join the fleet at Spithead, was given by the Empress herself to the English minister at Petersburgh. Instead of this being done, this very armament was made the basis, and constituted in fact the only effective force of the Armed Neutrality, which was avowedly directed against this country, for the purpose of adding to the accumulated misfortunes with which it was then overpowered.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XXVII.

SIR,

IN addition to her plan of depressing the power of England, the Empress of Russia expected to derive another advantage from the Armed Neutrality she had contrived to establish, by the facility she flattered herself it would afford her in her other favourite object of expelling the Turks from Europe. A plan for effecting this purpose, and for making a partition of their dominions, was accordingly arranged between her and the Emperor Joseph II. ; and every thing was settled for its immediate execution in the spring of 1783 ; when, to the surprize of the two Imperial Courts, and to the confusion of their views, the peace between England and her numerous foes was concluded. This event necessarily produced a great change in the whole system of Europe : and it particularly affected the ambitious views of the Empress ; as she now no longer could entertain the hope of accomplishing her deep-laid scheme of aggrandizement, when her marine confederacy

fell

fell into insignificance, and the preponderant navy of England was again at liberty to act.

But, though the immediate and open execution of the Empress's plan was thus defeated, her settled purpose of breaking the peace of Kainardgi, and of seizing on the Turkish possessions, still remained in force. Ever on the watch to avail herself of any favourable opportunity which might present itself, and indifferent whether she effected her point by open violence or by the safer mode of negotiation and influence, she waited till the moment when she judged the appointment of the coalition ministry had diverted the channels of the British Councils into a direction favourable to her purpose. She knew the desperate means by which they had obtained the possession of their places, and the little confidence reposed in them either by the Sovereign or the people. She knew the necessity under which they felt themselves, of securing their precarious administration by some great and brilliant stroke, which might divert the prejudice that generally prevailed against them, and might enable them to retain the power they had acquired. Her experience had also taught her, that there were ministers, as well as men, who might be flattered and cajoled, whose vanity would lay them open to Imperial attentions, and whose ambition would carry them beyond the rigid

rigid rules of duty to their country. She had not, it is true, received such unequivocal proofs of the truth of these opinions, as fortune since has thrown in her way; but she trusted to the justice of her conclusions, and acted upon them with confidence and with success. Far from opposing her rapacious plans of aggrandizement, our coalition ministers not only connived at and approved of them, but, when the Court of France made a formal overture to them, to know if they would suffer the Turks to be crushed, and to propose the means of preserving the balance of Europe, they rejected the proposal, and exerted themselves to forward the views of Russia.

Having thus removed the only real impediment which was in her way, the Empress proceeded, fearlessly and without delay, to break through the treaty, to the observance of which she had so lately sworn, by the attack and seizure of the Crimea. That wretched and devoted country was then the seat of at least two hundred thousand Tartar inhabitants; a race of people intelligent, civilized and industrious. They were reduced to less than twenty thousand. Ninetenths of the whole population were either driven into exile, or fell a sacrifice in the general massacre directed by General Souwarow.

Such

Such was the bloody end of an otherwise bloodless enterprize ; for the Turks were unable either to resist or to revenge an aggression made by a Power, not only formidable in itself, but rendered irresistible to them by the well-known support of Austria and of England.

ALFRED.

LETTER XXVIII.

SIR,

MONSIEUR de Vergennes was at this time prime minister in France. Aware of the critical situation of that kingdom, the finances and temper of which were in such a state, as to warrant the well-founded apprehensions he entertained of approaching convulsions, if not of absolute ruin, he exerted to the utmost that political sagacity with which he was so eminently endowed, in order to stave off the evil day, and to engage the attention of his own country, as well as of other Powers,

ers, on enterprizes and intrigues, which might prevent the minute enquiry into the weakness and poverty of France which he dreaded, and which he foresaw must lead to events, the most fatal to his own administration, and to the French Monarchy. With this view, when he found that his endeavours to engage the coalition ministry to support the cause of the Turks were ineffectual, he turned his attention to the side of Austria, between which Power and France a strict connexion subsisted, cemented by treaty, and by an intimate family tie.

Monsieur de Vergennes held out to the Emperor the flattering prospect of opening the navigation of the Scheldt, which he knew to be a matter of essential interest to Holland, and, as such, likely to call forth the strongest exertions of that republic, and of those States which were concerned in the prosperity of her commerce and navigation. This enterprize, as it is well known, was readily undertaken by the Emperor, with all that enthusiasm which marked his character. But as irresolution and mutability were equally the characteristics of that Sovereign, the design, after a few fruitless efforts, was abandoned, and Monsieur de Vergennes was reduced to the necessity of devising some other plan for the furtherance of his views. The fertility of his resources soon enabled him to

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suggest to the Emperor (of whose easy adoption of his schemes he had sufficient experience) the idea of effecting an exchange of the Netherlands for Bavaria, on condition that he should not prosecute his views against the Turks. From this plan the French minister expected to derive very important advantages. He conceived, that, by thus establishing the petty kingdom of Austrasia (for with that title the Elector of Bavaria was to be bribed to the exchange) which, by its situation, must always have been dependent on France, the accomplishment of his favourite object of perpetuating the dependence of Holland on that country would have been ensured, whilst England, whose reviving power he principally dreaded, would have been entirely cut off from all connexion with the continent.

When this project was communicated to Russia, the Empress, grateful for the obligations she owed to England, and immediately perceiving, in the accomplishment of the plan in question, the extent of the mischief which would result to us, as well as the advantages her own schemes of aggrandizement would receive from it, immediately determined to accelerate, as much as possible, the execution of Monsieur de Vergennes's idea. She accordingly took a leading part in the business; and, by her orders, the Russian minister at Frankfort

fort formally proposed this plan of exchange to the Duke of Deux Ponts, in the name of Russia, Austria, and France.

A matter of this importance, in which were implicated so many interests, and the execution of which tended directly to unhinge the whole system of Europe, could not be conducted with such secrecy as to escape the attention of England and Prussia, who were so materially concerned in preventing it from taking effect. The projects of the two Imperial Courts, and of France, had for some time engaged the attention of those two Powers, which severally had reason to apprehend the consequences of them, and to unite for the prevention of plans, which tended directly to the increase of the preponderance of their rivals, and to the diminution of their own. It is no wonder, therefore, that the alarm, occasioned by so daring a proposal as that we have mentioned, should have accelerated the return of friendship and confidence between the two Powers of Europe, which have the most natural causes of union, and the fewest motives for concurrence or jealousy. And it is a happy as well as remarkable circumstance, that the very project, which was aimed at the existence of the two countries, became the immediate cause of cementing between them an union,

which, in its consequences, has so materially contributed to the dignity and prosperity of both.

On this occasion their Britannic and Prussian Majesties acted with energy and effect. The three Courts, which had combined to bring forward the system of exchange, soon perceived the impossibility, under the existing circumstances, of executing their plan. The measure, therefore, was abandoned; and the formation of the Germanic association, which shortly after took place under the auspices of His Majesty, effectually prevented it from being again brought forward.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

SIR,

THE disappointment the three Courts had thus met with made a deep impression upon them; and, though the weakness of France, and the dread of cementing an alliance between England and Prussia, the weight of whose united force they had just experienced, prevented them from bringing forward immediately any further projects of aggrandizing themselves at their expence, they neither forgot nor forgave the check they had received. M. de Vergennes, however, aware of the critical situation of France, and perceiving the storm which was gathering over that country, exhausted as she was by her efforts in support of our revolted colonies, and by the enormous debt which that unjust enterprize had brought upon her; and foreseeing the fatal consequences which would inevitably ensue to France, in case of a failure of her schemes in Holland; took the determination of sacrificing the Turks, as well as every other consideration, to an object of such superior personal importance. He accordingly lost no

time in making advances to Russia, of whose resentment for her late disappointment he was well aware, and of whose sentiments towards England, the armed neutrality, and the subsequent conduct of that court, had sufficiently convinced him. He proposed a treaty of commerce between the two countries, in which France was to be considered as the most favoured nation. The completion of the measure, he knew, would not only be extremely popular and advantageous at home, but would affect the interests of England in the most essential manner; a consideration of no small importance to both countries, whose political consequence so greatly depended on a diminution of the British influence and resources.

Nothing could more strongly evince the penetration and political sagacity of M. de Vergennes than such a proposal; nor indeed could he have made it at a moment more suitable to his own views, and more likely to fall in with those of Russia, already well-disposed to avail herself of every opportunity of counteracting the interests of Great Britain.

From the first introduction of Russia into the political system of Europe, a close and advantageous commercial connexion had subsisted between her and England. The advantages resulting

ing from this had been reciprocal. The latter had taken a very great proportion of those commodities which the dominions of the former produced, and which could not otherwise have found a market; while, at the same time, she not only made valuable returns in specie, but contracted the habit of advancing large sums, for the purpose of enabling the Russians to raise the commodities she purchased from them. The natural consequence of such an intercourse, was the attainment, on the part of England, of several great and exclusive advantages of trade, as a fair return for the many benefits which Russia enjoyed from this connexion, and which she could not hope to receive from any other country. This trade had been regulated upon these principles by various successive treaties; and continued on the footing I have mentioned, and with little diminution, till the year 1766, when the existing treaty expired.

The present Empress had then been for some time seated on the Imperial throne; and, though the time when her intentions towards England were to be fully developed was not yet arrived, the tendency of her politics appeared with a degree of certainty, from the impediments she threw in the way of the negotiation, which the importance of the object had induced us to open, for the renewal of our commercial arrangements,

After many delays and difficulties, however, a fresh treaty was at length executed; by which a variety of restrictions were imposed on the British merchants, and, in return, no real advantages were secured to them, beyond that of being exempt from the payment of duties in dollars. In proportion, however, as the marine of Russia became respectable, and as the friendly assistance of England raised her into a capacity of contending for superiority with her benefactor, even this privilege was rendered of as little use as it could be, by a similar indulgence being granted to all other nations. Nor were any of the other advantages realized which had been stipulated for in that treaty. On the contrary, every effort appeared to have been exerted on the part of Russia, to oppress our merchants, and to throw impediments in their way. While the treaty, however, continued to exist, it was impossible for Russia to prevent the activity and great capitals of the English from ensuring to them that pre-eminence which they enjoyed, and which gave them all the real advantages which could have been acquired by any other people, however dignified by the title of the most favoured nation.

It was in 1785, when no more than a year remained before the expiration of the treaty with England, that Monsieur de Vergennes made his proposal to Russia, of a commercial treaty with France.

France. Nothing could more directly coincide with the views of the Empress. She immediately seized, and improved upon the idea. The treaty was concluded with every attendant circumstance that could insult Great Britain; and when, in the ensuing year, the treaty of 1766 expired, her Imperial Majesty not only refused to grant any privilege to the British merchants, but made such extravagant proposals of restrictions upon them, and of advantages for her own subjects, that the Russia company, sensible that a treaty grounded on such principles would be worse than no treaty at all, expressed their desire that it should not be concluded. Since that period, Great Britain has been considered in Russia as the least favoured nation; every practicable impediment has been thrown in the way of her traders; the privilege of paying the duties in dollars has been withheld from them, while it has been allowed to the subjects of every other country; all the manufactures and produce of this country have been made to pay a duty from twenty to one hundred per cent. though England is known to take at least four-fifths of the produce of Russia, and that these are raised solely by English money, of which there are always at least three millions floating in that country.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XXX.

SIR,

AT the same time that the Empress concluded the treaty with France, another enterprize, of a tendency as inimical to the power and even existence of this country, as the former had been to its trading interests, occupied her attention, and was prosecuted with that impetuous perseverance which constitutes so prominent a feature in her character. This was no other than a negotiation with the court of France, with which, it has been observed, she had just made an intimate connexion, for the purpose of forming a combination avowedly and directly hostile to Great Britain; to which it was proposed, that Austria and Spain should be invited to accede. The object of this confederacy was the depression of a Power which stood in the way of those ambitious projects which the Empress continued to cherish, and in the execution of which she foresaw innumerable difficulties, from the new councils by which this country had been governed since the appointment
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of the administration in 1783. Superior to all personal considerations, and above being influenced by any hopes or promises held out to them by foreign nations, our ministers now pursued the wise and steady plan of consulting solely the interests of the country, the affairs of which they had been chosen to conduct. Secure of the support of their Sovereign, and possessing the confidence of the people, who felt and acknowledged the benefits of their administration, it was as little their object, as it was their wish, to intrigue for foreign support, or to sacrifice by cabals, and illicit negotiations, the duties of the sacred trust which had been committed to them. As the arts of Russia were thus become ineffectual, nothing remained to her but such an accession of weight, as might be sufficient to crush and overwhelm the power she dreaded. Monsieur de Vergennes, whose reasons for wishing the destruction of England, though different from those of the Empress, were not less cogent, readily concurred with her in the proposal she had suggested. The affairs of France had now made a rapid progress towards a national bankruptcy; and an alarming spirit of enquiry into political grievances, and of investigation of the abstract principles of government—the fruits of the connexion which had subsisted with America during the late war, sublimed and directed by discontented and designing men at home

home—made it apparent, that the same causes, which had occasioned the revolt in the English Colonies, would speedily operate in a similar manner upon the people of France ; where the actually oppressive government, and the little share the great mass of the nation had in the direction of affairs for which they were so heavily taxed, afforded a much stronger ground for dissatisfaction, than any of those grievances which had been insisted upon by the States of America. To prevent the bursting of a storm, which so infallibly would envelope in a common ruin the French monarchy and the French nation, and of which it would be impossible to calculate the consequences, though it was easy to foresee they would be in the highest degree disastrous and destructive, Monsieur de Vergennes perceived that no other means remained, than those of involving his country in a war with England, and of engaging the attention of the French nation, and wasting the effervescence of popular discontent, on objects remote from the seat of government, and which, by their brilliancy and interest, might occupy and flatter their vanity and prejudices.

Such were the motives which, on this occasion, influenced the councils of Russia and France, and which led them to the formation of a confederacy against England. They afford a convincing

vincing proof what little influence morality, honour, or honesty have, when opposed to interest or ambition. Such, however, is the blindness of human wisdom, and such the force of habitual inattention to what is passing before us on the great stage of human life, that ordinary deviations from integrity and virtue pass with little comment, and with less recollection; and even the great and striking features of political depravity leave behind them a trifling impression, which is easily erased by successive events. So great, indeed, is the facility with which the remembrance of them passes from our minds, and is lost in the vortex of domestic and personal considerations, that it requires a great, and by no means a common acquaintance with the modern history of Europe, to detect the fallacy and impositions practised upon us by artful and interested men, for the furtherance of party-purposes. He alone, who knows the real conduct pursued by Russia, can estimate properly the designs and connexions of those orators, who have dared to insult the good sense and feelings of their countrymen, by declamations upon humanity and moderation, upon the regard and friendship the Empress of Russia entertains for England, and upon the attention she has shewn to our commercial interests: he alone will be able to decide upon the truth of their favourite assertion—which became the catch-word of the

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the party, and was insultingly repeated on a late occasion, when the credit and honour of this country were at stake, and when a contest of no less import than the welfare of all Europe, was depending—that the Empress of Russia is the natural ally of Great Britain. How far this assertion deserved belief, the circumstances already stated will best determine. They are the evidences of incontrovertible fact opposed to the sophistry and jargon of interested and shameless declamation.

The course of this enquiry will naturally lead to a further discussion of this subject ; and there will be ample occasion, when we arrive at the period when the conduct of Russia had provoked the resentment of England, and when the Russian party in this country had an opportunity of manifesting its real sentiments, to enter more fully into the detail of a question, the most important, whether considered with a view to our interests or our honour, of any which can engage the attention of the people of Great Britain.

While these machinations were going forward between Russia and France, and while the utmost malice of these two Powers was exerted to distress and crush this country, the operation of M. de Vergennes's plans on the side of Holland hastened the accomplishment of an event, on
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which not only the interests and prosperity of England materially depended, but which, in its remoter consequences, as well as its immediate effect, operated directly and forcibly on the general interests of Europe.

As the accession of Russia had, in a great degree, facilitated the operation of the other plans which M. de Vergennes had formed, for the double purpose of distressing England, and of averting the evils which so evidently threatened his own country, that minister lost no time in bringing into action the great machine he had prepared in Holland; trusting for success to the intrigues which he so dextrously had conducted among many leading Members of that republic, and to the unprotected state in which the Stadtholder, and those devoted to his interests, appeared to be at the moment.

The memorable transactions of the summer 1787, and the total failure of the French designs in Holland, are too fresh in the memory of every one, to make it necessary for me to enter into any particulars upon a subject, on which every Englishman must thankfully and proudly reflect, as honourable to the councils and the spirit of his country, and as having laid the foundation of that influence and weight which Great Britain has since

since maintained over the politics of Europe. Great indeed were the advantages, which the honest and generous conduct of England and Prussia derived from their united operations on this occasion. At a trifling expence, and by an almost momentary exertion, they gained more than they ever had obtained by the most brilliant and successful war : for they redeemed the national credit of Great Britain ; they re-established her influence in Europe ; they secured her possessions and dominion in India ; they unmasked the poverty, imbecility, and ruined condition of France ; they paved the way to the great revolution which has since taken place in that country ; they effectually broke the confederacy which she had formed with the Imperial and Bourbon Courts, and defeated the plans they had devised for our destruction ; and, above all, they laid the foundation of that glorious alliance between Great Britain, Prussia and Holland, which brought them forward on the scene of Europe, which enabled them to take the lead in the affairs of the continent, and which, while it consolidated and strengthened their individual interests, enabled them to accomplish the great objects of their association, the maintenance of their own security and dignity, as combined with the general interests of Europe.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI

SIR,

ALTHOUGH the revolution in Holland, and the conclusion of the alliance between that Republic, Great Britain and Prussia, were posterior in point of time to the breaking out of the war between Turkey and the two Imperial courts, I thought it better to conclude the immediate subject on which my attention was engaged, before I entered on another, which in its consequences became so interesting to this country, and which necessarily requires a considerable attention from any one, who wishes to form a true judgment on a matter which has so often been discussed, and which has so singularly shewn the effect of party invective and manœuvre operating on the unprepared and uninformed mind of the public.

Having already gone considerably at length into the causes of this war, it will be sufficient in this place to say, that, in the summer of 1787, the Turks, harrassed by the continual encroach-

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ments, and other vexatious proceedings of Russia, and sensible that the continuance of a passive conduct on their side might inevitably and speedily lead to the destruction of their empire in Europe, declared war against Russia, and published their reasons for so doing in a manifesto, which never has been, and never can be refuted.

Among the other artifices which have been employed by a faction in this country, to traduce the present administration, to cast an odium on our alliance with Prussia, and to support the interests of the court of St. Petersburg in opposition to our own, an assertion has been confidently made, that England and Prussia encouraged and excited the Porte to the adoption of this hostile measure. No assertion, Sir, can be more perfectly unfounded. So far from having either advised such a step, or assisted in its execution, the courts of London and Berlin were no sooner informed of the rupture, than they jointly offered to Russia the intervention of their good offices, and best endeavours, to prevent the commencement of hostilities, on terms the most honourable for the Empress; from the conviction that a Turkish war, at a moment of such critical importance, might not only produce dangerous alterations in the relative situation of the two belligerent Powers, but might, from its evident and very probable consequences, lead

lead to a general war. On the reception of this overture, the Empress of Russia for some time hesitated; but at length rejected the offer, influenced, as it may be supposed, by the engagement of the Emperor to become a principal party in the war.

The King of Prussia naturally felt an alarm at the prospect of aggrandizement of the two Imperial courts at the expence of Turkey.—From the force of their united arms, this might probably have been considerable; and, if so, its obvious consequence would have been the destruction of all proportion between his resources and theirs, and the exposure of his dominions to the most imminent danger of being overpowered. He knew that the two Imperial courts had long looked upon the Prussian Monarchy with a jealous eye; that they regarded it as the only continental Power which stood in the way of their gigantic and monopolizing plans, and which could effectually prevent them from overturning the balance of Germany and the North; and that they deprecated the consolidation of those resources, and of that alliance with England and Holland (which, though not actually concluded, was yet known to be on the eve of taking place) that must so certainly tend to the augmentation of a Power, from which they knew they already had so much

to apprehend. His Prussian Majesty, therefore, lost no time in stating these apprehensions to the court of London; and, as there were equally strong reasons for the government of England to object to the aggrandizement of Powers, the avowed objects of whom were the extinction of the Turkish empire in Europe, and the erection of new maritime establishments, which must tend directly to the destruction of a valuable branch of our commerce, and the essential injury of our naval pre-eminence; the prevention, if possible, of any material alteration in the relative situation of the belligerent Powers, was admitted to be a most important object of mutual interest. It was therefore agreed, that Great Britain and Prussia should act in concert, with a view to restore peace on this principle.

While the allies were treating on this subject, during the summer of 1788, the King of Sweden, availing himself of the division of the Russian force, declared war against the Empress, on the avowed pretence of various grievances under which he laboured, and of his being an ally of the Porte.

On this occasion, as on the former, the clamour of party ascribed his Swedish Majesty's aggression to the intrigues and incitements of the allies. Both assertions, however, were equally untrue.

untrue. Instead of giving any encouragement to this measure, Great Britain and Prussia very strongly expressed their disapprobation of it to the court of Sweden ; and, as a further evidence of their earnest desire to prevent the commencement of hostilities, they sent joint overtures for that purpose, both to St. Petersburg and to Stockholm, and professed themselves ready to mediate an accommodation between those courts, on the principle of the status quo. The King of Sweden, although the first mover in the impending quarrel, respected the dignified and generous interposition of the allies, and without hesitation accepted of their offer ; but the Empress of Russia, as if gratified by the extension of hostilities, and breathing indignation and signal vengeance against her Swedish rival, proudly and without qualification, rejected the pacific proposal.

Things being thus circumstanced, a new belligerent Power, very shortly after, made its appearance. Denmark, subservient to the influence of Russia—combining obedience to the will of the Empress with her national antipathy to Sweden—and either forgetting, or not having capacity to discover, that the destruction of the latter would inevitably induce the ruin of her own political existence, now stood forward as the volunteer ally

of Russia, and threatened an invasion of the Swedish dominions, at a moment when the force of that kingdom was engaged in a contest with its formidable antagonist. On this occasion also, the magnanimity and moderation of the allies was manifested. As soon as it was known that the military preparations in Denmark were advancing for this purpose, Great Britain and Prussia represented to that court, that she was no longer bound by any defensive engagements to assist Russia against Sweden; and that they could not allow the latter Power to be crushed, or to become dependent on the former; as the inevitable consequence of such an event would be the destruction of the political balance, not only of the North, but of all Europe; and as the freedom of the commerce and navigation of the Baltic would be totally at the mercy of Russia.

These representations, however, were not attended with the desired effect. Implicitly obedient to the will of the Empress, and forgetful of her own pacific assurances, Denmark invaded Sweden. The allies then, assuming a stronger tone, repeated their remonstrances. Though they had failed to persuade, they were able to intimidate. Denmark, not less ready to retire from the theatre of war than she had been to enter upon it, agreed to abandon the cause of her Imperial

perial ally, and to withdraw her troops from Sweden: and England and Prussia had the credit of saving, by their interposition, that exposed and distracted country, and of preventing the subjection of her ample provinces to the grasping hand of Imperial ambition.

ALFRED.

LETTER XXXII.

SIR,

THE events of the campaigns of 1788 and 1789 are too well known to make it necessary for me to enumerate them. It will be enough to say, that, during both those years, the allies continued their system of conciliation, and lost no opportunity of renewing their pacific overtures to all the belligerent Powers. Their mediation was accepted by Turkey and Sweden; but Russia persisted in her refusal of it. The successes of the two Imperial courts indeed had now become

very considerable ; and the important advantages they had gained over the Turks, not only threatened a speedy completion of those plans of aggrandizement which I have had such frequent occasion to mention, but became an object of serious alarm to the King of Prussia, who justly apprehended the consequences of such an accession of power to his rivals. His Prussian Majesty, therefore, found it necessary, in the course of the winter 1789, to enter into a negotiation with the Turks, for the purpose of saving them from destruction. This negotiation terminated in a formal engagement to that effect.

As the dangers to be expected from another campaign appeared to be considerable, this country, in conformity with the system it had pursued from the beginning of the war, and considering its own interests, as well as those of its ally, to be very deeply concerned, renewed, in conjunction with Prussia, its representations to the two Imperial courts, and took such measures as appeared the most advisable, for securing the neutrality of Denmark, France, and Spain.

The Empress of Russia still rejected every proposal of mediation, and insisted on retaining almost all the conquests she had made during the war. The death of Joseph the Second, however, had

had produced a considerable change in the views of the Austrian court. The Emperor Leopold, immediately on his accession, accepted of the mediation of the allies, and entered into a negotiation with them for the conclusion of a peace with the Porte.

As a doubt, however, was entertained of the sincerity of the Emperor's intentions, and as it was suspected that his real view might be to gain time, in order the more effectually to prosecute the war against the Turks in conjunction with Russia, the King of Prussia determined to negotiate with such a force, as might be sufficient to prove the sincerity of his own intentions, and to induce the Emperor to acquiesce in the proposal of concluding a peace on the basis of the status quo. He therefore took the field in the month of June 1790, with an army of 150,000 men, which he posted on the frontier of Bohemia and Moravia.

Harsh and humiliating as the conditions of restoring all the conquests he had made from the Turks, and of engaging to give no assistance to Russia, should she persist in carrying on the war, must have been to the Emperor, his Imperial Majesty, after some hesitation, accepted of these terms. A convention between the two Monarchs,

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with the concurrence of the English and Dutch plenipotentiaries, was executed at Reichenbach on the 27th of July; by which it was agreed, that the Emperor should restore all his conquests to the Turks, and should give no assistance, directly or indirectly, to Russia; and that the Austrian government should be re-established in the Netherlands, with the ancient constitution and privileges, as they existed after the peace of Utrecht.

The allies having thus successfully carried the important point of removing the Emperor from a participation in the Turkish war, lost no time in making a fresh representation to the Empress of Russia, and in urging her to imitate the example of her ally, by making a peace with Sweden and the Porte, on the terms of the status quo. At the same time, proper measures were taken to prevent the King of Sweden from being overpowered; and 30,000 men were detached to reinforce the Prussian army of observation (which consisted of about the same number) posted on the frontiers of Prussia towards Livonia; while his Prussian Majesty had in readiness a further reserve of at least 150,000 men, ready to act on the first emergency.

The Empress, finding herself abandoned by Austria, and aware of the dangers she must incur
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from the resentment of the allies, should she persist in her haughty and extravagant demands upon Turkey, forgot the indignation she had felt towards the King of Sweden, and hastily concluded a peace with him on the very terms which had been proposed by the allies. She also thought proper to recede from the arrogant pretensions she had insisted upon, of retaining the immense provinces which she had gained from the Turks; and offered to restore to them the whole of her conquests, excepting Oczakow and its District.

The allies, satisfied of the justice of their demand, and convinced from this conduct of the Empress, that her apprehensions of committing herself with them had been the sole cause of this sudden moderation, and that the same cause would at length compel her to submit to a complete acquiescence in the terms held out, rejected the proposal, and insisted upon the strict status quo. The King of Prussia put every thing into a state of preparation, for the purpose of taking the field, should the refusal of the Empress render such a measure necessary; and His Majesty, at once consulting the peace of Europe, the interests of himself and his allies, and the dignity of his country, took immediate and vigorous measures for arming a formidable fleet, to co-operate with the King of Prussia, and to prevent the dan-

dangerous consequences, as well to Europe in general, as to England and Prussia in particular, which were likely to result from a further prosecution of the Russian plans against the Turks.

Such was the state of affairs, when the King's message was delivered to Parliament in March 1791. The magnitude of this point will, I trust, be my apology with your readers, for entering somewhat at large into its discussion. A matter of such very serious importance to this country cannot be indifferent to any one who feels an interest in its prosperity and glory; and, if the arts of faction were able, in a moment of infatuation and phrenzy, to overturn the wise and dignified system which had been adopted by the King's ministers, it becomes perhaps doubly necessary at present, when the mind of the public no longer is influenced by sophistry and misrepresentation, to state the solid grounds of precaution and alarm, which, in my opinion, not only justified the measures that had been taken, but which still call upon us anxiously and vigilantly to watch the proceedings of a Power, already formidable from its dominion and influence, and bent upon the increase of both, without much attention to the rectitude of the means by which they are to be acquired.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIII.

SIR,

I HAVE always been decidedly of opinion, that the King's ministers were right in having adopted the resolution of enforcing by an armament the propositions, which, in conjunction with Prussia, they had made to the Empress of Russia, of concluding a peace with the Turks on the basis of the status quo, or the complete restitution of all the conquests she had made during the war. They were justified in the adoption of this measure by every consideration of national dignity; by the interest which Europe in general, but particularly Great Britain, had in the integrity and security of the remaining possessions of the Turks in Europe, on which materially depend the commercial and maritime, as well as political interests of this country; and they had every reason to believe, that the proposition they had made to the court of St. Petersburg would be acceded to, or that, if it had been refused, a very small, and by no means an expensive armament, would have ensured

sured the acquiescence of the Empress to a measure, which nothing but the successful operation of a faction among ourselves could have enabled her to withstand.

I am ready to admit, that war is an evil, and that the magnitude of this evil is in a ratio of the actual prosperity, riches, and commerce of the nation which finds itself under the necessity of entering into it. To this general proposition, however, there are innumerable exceptions. However war may be deprecated, it must be resorted to, whenever the interests and safety of a country cannot otherwise be maintained ; and the preservation of remote and contingent interests is as much our duty, as the defence of those which immediately affect our personal feelings. The glory and security of our posterity is a sacred trust committed to our care. We owe to them the faithful discharge of that duty which our forefathers have so faithfully discharged towards ourselves ; and, as they never feared to encounter perils, and even death itself, for the preservation of those blessings which we enjoy, so are we equally bound to ensure the continuance of them to our descendants, by the same exertions, and at the same risk.

In the catalogue of those blessings, no true Briton will rank as the last the dignity and honour

nour of his country. As the good character of an individual is his best possession, so is its dignity the best possession of a nation. The loss of character to an individual entails loss of credit, confidence, and weight in society. The loss of dignity to a nation lowers her in the scale of surrounding Powers, disables her from future exertions, and dissolves the magic of superior influence, which her former exertions may have created. There may be temptations, there may be reasons, for giving up wealth, territory or power; but there can be neither for giving up that pre-eminence of virtuous dignity, which a long adherence to an honourable course of successful integrity has established. Were other considerations totally removed, our very interest would lead us to adopt these principles; for the invariable experience of past ages inculcates this truth, that national dignity is as necessary to national prosperity, as individual character is to individual success. Nor will it ever be found, that national dignity is opposed to national wisdom. They are essentially the same; nor can the one exist, much less can it be maintained, without the other. National wisdom cannot consist in any thing which degrades the national character; nor can a nation ever arrive at dignity, unless it pursues the paths traced out by wisdom.

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When the dispute with Russia arose, this nation had much dignity to support. At the head of an alliance which had directed the politics of Europe, and to whose superior influence the Austrian Cabinet had so recently bowed, it was the duty of the King's ministers, and it undoubtedly was their wish, to maintain the glory of their country, which had been so exalted by their councils; and to take those measures of vigorous preparation, on the success of which, in their judgments, not only the credit of this country, but its commerce, its finances, and its power, so materially depended. If the attainment of Oczakow and its District by Russia was, in a fair calculation of its consequences, likely to affect all these, and if it was to be prevented no otherwise than by risking a war, the measures adopted by government were wise, and ought to have been supported by the public.

The conduct of our ministers on this occasion was, indeed, no more than a continuation of that plan of mediation, and of restoring to Europe, not only an immediate peace, but one which would long ensure the continuance of that blessing, upon which they had acted from the beginning of the war. In proportion to its progress, to the advantages gained by the Imperial courts over the Turks, and consequently to the danger
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which threatened the general tranquillity of Europe, the energy of their representations had increased ; and when at length, in the year 1790, it was found expedient to adopt a higher tone, in order to save the Porte from immediate destruction, by compelling the Emperor to recede from his confederacy with Russia, the steady and dignified manifestation made by the King of Prussia, backed by the known concurrence of England and Holland, succeeded, as we have seen, in withdrawing him from his share in the war, and in procuring for the Turks the complete status quo upon which he had insisted.

When we consider the success which had thus attended this measure, and the circumstances under which it was carried into effect, it surely cannot appear either injudicious or rash in our ministers, to have looked for a similar termination of their negociation with Russia, under circumstances much more favourable to them than those which existed anterior to the convention of Reichenbach. In the latter case we had to contend with a great and powerful confederacy, acting in concert, proud from a consciousness of superiority and success, and stimulated by the weakness of their adversary, and by the temptation of still greater successes, to a continuance of conquests. The situation of the Emperor's dominions also

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was such, as in a great measure to prevent him from feeling any inconvenience from the marine of England and Holland, and left him in fact only one of the allies from whom he could apprehend any danger. - The impression, therefore, which could have been made upon him, at least in the field, was little more than what he had to apprehend from Prussia alone. The sense, however, of his exhausted situation; the knowledge he had of the armies and the resources of his opponent, and the apprehensions he entertained of domestic evils from the commencement of fresh hostilities, led him, after merely a shew of resistance, and actually without a struggle, to a complete acquiescence in the humiliating terms held out to him.

In the case of Russia, every thing conspired to prove, that a similar conduct on the part of the allies would have been attended with similar consequences. Far from being secured against the attack of England and Holland, the situation of the Empress's dominions was such, that our combined fleets must have acted upon her most valuable and vulnerable possessions; while, on the side of Poland and Livonia, the arms of Prussia, rendered still more formidable by a sense of the impression they had recently made upon the Emperor, and deriving new spirit and confidence from

from this circumstance, must have made an irresistible impression. We ran no danger from any impediments being thrown in our way on the side of Denmark, the neutrality of that Power being ascertained. We were also sure of a free admission into the Danish and Swedish ports; and the moment when the British fleet would have appeared in the Baltic was precisely that, when the season was best adapted for maritime operations in that part of the world, and when the sea would have been open to us for more than six months. The Empress of Russia, moreover, now stood alone: the Imperial confederacy had now ceased to exist; and, consequently, the weight which the Emperor had derived from it in his negotiation no longer operated. At war with Turkey and Sweden, exhausted both of men and of money, and exposed, under these embarrassments, to the attack of fresh and formidable enemies; the situation of Russia was, in all these respects, worse than that of the Emperor had been, and consequently, her chance of escaping from the calamities which threatened her, was less than his. Nor were her apprehensions of the dangers she had to expect from internal discontents and commotions, inferior to those which had influenced the Emperor. A spirit of dissatisfaction prevailed throughout her dominions, which waited only for a favourable opportunity to blaze forth, and

overwhelm her. She knew, and she felt the force of all these circumstances. Proud, imperious, and confident as she might be, and however urged forward by the vanity and flattery of her advisers to ambitious and gigantic enterprizes, these motives would have compelled her to accept of the proffered terms, had there not even been other considerations to induce her to listen to our proposals. She knew too well the value of her infant navy, which she had reared with such care as the means of fulfilling her mighty plans of aggrandizement, to hazard its destruction: she knew that this would be the immediate operation of a British fleet in the Baltic; and that, with it, the labour of her reign, and every hope she had cherished of realizing her views of conquest, would be annihilated. She knew too the danger which threatened her on the side of Livonia, and the risk she ran from the animosity of Poland. She was well aware of all this; and, though her high spirit induced her to stand out to the last moment, every consideration, foreign and domestic, led her to conclude, that, to resist the allies would be to encounter destruction. This is no fanciful or ideal representation. It cannot be contradicted, that, when Count Woronzow's dispatch arrived at Petersburg, with information of the King's message to parliament, and of the armament which was about to take place, a general terror prevailed,

vailed, and the Empress, as if every thing was lost, actually made preparations for quitting her capital, and retiring to the centre of her dominions. Unhappily, however, this state of dread and humiliation soon passed away. Within two days Count Woronzow's second dispatches arrived ; which consoled the Imperial fears, by the comfortable assurance, that the strenuous and wise determination of our government had been rendered abortive by the arts and misrepresentations of a faction among us ; and that the Empress might depend upon the ascendancy, which this had for the moment obtained over the public mind, being employed for the maintenance of the Russian honour and interests, at the expence of those of Great Britain.

ALFRED.

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LETTER

LETTER XXXIV.

SIR,

HAVING discussed the probabilities of success which attended the measures adopted by His Majesty's ministers, let us now consider the importance of the object which occasioned them; let us enquire whether the acquisition of Oczakow and its District by Russia was likely, in its consequences, to accelerate the ruin of the European empire of the Turks; and how far such an event might be expected to operate on the general balance of Europe, and more particularly on the most essential interests of Great Britain.

I have already had frequent occasion to mention the settled plan of aggrandizement adopted by Peter the First, and pursued by his successors; the foundation of which was laid in the destruction of the Turkish empire, and the establishment of a southern naval force. For the accomplishment of these views, war after war was undertaken; conquests were added to conquests; and,

and, at the expence both of men and of treasure which no other country could have sustained, Russia, by the assistance of England, raised a maritime force, which enabled her to obtain the possession of the Crimea, and, with the Kuban, the facility of communicating from the Euxine to the Caspian sea. Vain, however, and comparatively unimportant, were all these acquisitions : Constantinople still remained the seat of Ottoman sovereignty ; and neither the Crimea, nor the vast dominions extending to the Don and the Wolga, were of much advantage to her in themselves, or capable of becoming the nurseries of those fleets, which were to extend the operations of her arms, and to open to her ambition new prospects of commerce and maritime ascendancy.

The experience of the Empress had convinced her of the distinction, between the nominal dominion of this territory, and the real possession of the advantages to be derived from it. The former she indisputably possessed ; but the latter were to be procured only by the acquisition of the northern shores of the Liman, and of the territory extending from the Dnieper to the Dniester ; a barren and unpeopled district, yet containing in itself the means of realizing all her hopes, and of enabling her to command the fate of empires, and the commerce and navigation of the world.

Whatever may have been said by the partizans of Russia, with a view to impose upon the good sense of the public, and to mask the real designs of the Empress, the Crimea, under the existing circumstances in the spring of 1791, was so far from being of advantage to her, that it was an unprofitable, losing and decaying possession. In the short period of eight years, during which it had groaned under the Russian yoke, it had been the grave of more than one hundred thousand Russians, who had been driven thither as colonists from different parts of the Imperial dominions, and who had fallen victims to the various hardships they had encountered in that depopulated country, and to the miserable consequences of a total want of food and common necessities. These were not to be met with in that unhappy peninsula; nor were they to be produced, except through the channels of the Dnieper and the Dniester. Such a supply, at all times precarious, but especially so during the continuance of hostilities with the Turks, was found to be inadequate to the maintenance of those, whom the hard hand of power had sentenced to reside on this desolated spot. Yet, in the Crimea were to be found the means of realizing all the ambitious views of Russia. Its situation, which commanded the Black Sea, and an immediate communication with Constantinople—its harbours, and particularly

larly that of Sevastopol, which surpassed in extent and security any yet known in the ancient world, wanted no more than the acquisition of Oczakow and its District to give them effect and energy, and to convert them from barren and unprofitable possessions into an inexhaustible source of wealth and power.

Russia can no otherwise have a naval force in the Black Sea, than by ensuring to herself the secure and uninterrupted means of building her ships there. The policy of Peter the First long ago pointed out to him this necessity; and he made a great, though fruitless attempt, to establish a dock-yard in the sea of Azoph and at the mouth of the Don. He found, however, that materials for the purpose of naval equipments were not to be thence drawn, either with facility or with certainty. In fact, such is the shallowness of the sea of Azoph, that it will not admit of any ship which draws more than sixteen feet of water; and even these are not in safety there, during the months of July and August, when the water is low: and the navigation of the Don is so impracticable, from want of water, and from the innumerable sand-banks which are every where dispersed throughout its channel, that all the attempts made by the Russians for this purpose have hitherto been found to be fruitless. In spite, there-

therefore, of every effort which was employed by that monarch and his successors, Russia never was able to establish a naval force of any consequence in the Black Sea, till after the peace of Kainardgi, when she obtained Cherson; although she was completely mistress of the sea of Azoph from the year 1739; during which war, as well as during that which lasted from 1769 to 1774, she was also in possession of the Crimea.

The acquisition of Cherson considerably augmented the facility of forming a fleet in the Black Sea. By means of the Dnieper, timber of the best quality was procured, as well as iron and hemp, in large quantities, and at a reasonable price. The depth of water was such, as to enable the largest ships to ride there in safety. It was however attended with one disadvantage, which in a great degree counterbalanced these favourable circumstances. The passage of the Liman, in consequence of a sand-bank at its entrance, cannot be navigated by large ships carrying their guns. The Russians, therefore, were obliged to send them unarmed to Sevastopol in the Crimea, where naval magazines were established, and where their ships of war were to be supplied with artillery. As these defenceless vessels were thus obliged to pass under the cannon of Oczakow, and were necessarily exposed to the insults of the Turkish frigates,
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and other vessels perpetually stationed there, a constant apprehension of their safety prevailed; and it was impossible to calculate, with any certainty, on the formation of a marine labouring under such a disadvantage. Though the fortress of Kinburn, situated on the southern shore of the Liman, operated as a considerable check on the Turks, yet it could not prevent them from availing themselves of the facility which Oczakow afforded them, of impeding the passage of Russian vessels from Cherson; and if, on the one hand, the fortress of Kinburn has enabled the Russians to check the progress of the Turkish armaments, the possession of Oczakow on the other has been known to enable the Turks to overawe the Russian fleets, and even to destroy their ships of war in their passage from Cherson to the sea.

The acquisition of Oczakow, therefore, was a necessary preliminary to the certain establishment of a Russian naval power in the Black Sea. It was no less essential to the furtherance of all the Empress's views in the Crimea. Ships built at Cherson, and navigated without risk through the Liman, would arrive in safety at Sevastopol, where they were to be armed and equipped. Her fleets, lying there in perfect security, would be ready to avail themselves of the first favourable moment to stretch across the Euxine to Constantinople,

tinople, from which they would not be more than twenty-four hours sail. The population and cultivation of the Crimea would be the immediate consequence of this circumstance—towns and villages would arise, and the labour of the husbandman would be employed for the maintenance of the artisan and the seaman.

If indeed any doubt remains as to the importance of Oczakow to the views and plans of Russia, an indisputable authority may be produced to substantiate it. The Empress of Russia herself, in her manifesto or address to the different Courts of Europe, stiles Oczakow "The key of the Crimea." In her hands it undoubtedly will open all the treasures of that great peninsula. She has never been much inclined to abstain from such advantages, when they have been thrown in her way; and, when they are so connected with the best interests of her empire, we can hardly flatter ourselves she will not pursue them to the utmost.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XXXV.

SIR,

THE importance of the District of Oczakow to Russia, as a means of commanding Poland and Moldavia, is not less than we have seen it to be as a key to the Crimea, and as facilitating the formation of a navy.

When we consider the question in this point of view, we must not forget, that, when the King's message was sent to parliament, the Poles had completely renounced the Russian yoke, and had concluded a treaty of alliance with Prussia, under whose auspices and protection they were perfecting their new constitution, which was established in May 1791. At this period, therefore, the Empress of Russia was sensible, that the influence she had possessed in that country was at an end; and that, instead of directing its councils and armies, instead of availing herself of those valuable resources she had been accustomed to derive from Poland, a new enemy was rising up
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against her in that quarter, capable, from its situation, from its connexion with Prussia, from its warlike spirit, from its enthusiastic ardour for a rational freedom, founded on monarchy, good order, and the temperate exercise of liberty, and, above all, from its rooted antipathy to the harsh and desolating dominion of Russia, to become a foe in the highest degree formidable to every interest she was most anxious to improve.

The Empress of Russia has long been aware of the impossibility of ever realizing, at least to any lasting effect, her great plan of extending her empire over the coasts of the Black Sea, without forming a connecting link between them and the shores of the Baltic. While this should be wanting, she might indeed retain and improve the Crimea, and her extensive southern possessions; but they would necessarily form a distinct dominion, separated from each other by an immense barrier, and forming, in fact, though not in name, two distinct empires. It requires not much penetration to discover, that, in such a case, the dreary and inhospitable regions of the north would speedily be deserted for the milder and more genial climate of the south; and that either the unconnected fabric would break to pieces, or that the present seat of Russian government would become a province, no further
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of importance than as possessing the means of northern navigation, and the facility of connecting all the sources of a marine dominion.

Determined, as the Empress of Russia undoubtedly is, to acquire the means of establishing a southern naval power, without risking the loss of that she already possesses in the Baltic, she saw the importance of removing, as much as possible, the barrier I have mentioned; and she therefore resolved to keep as long as she could the District of Oczakow, which she knew was the only real impediment in her way, and the possession of which, she was well aware, would give her such a command over Poland and Moldavia, as would enable her to stretch from St. Petersburg to Constantinople, and to form, at her pleasure, a regular and connected communication between them.

Though the District of Oczakow was of less importance to Russia when Poland was totally at her disposal, as she marched her armies against the Turks through that country, and derived all her supplies from it; yet, even under those circumstances, the Russians, in every war in which they were engaged, felt very sensibly the effects of its being in the hands of the Turks. The siege of Oczakow was a constant and indispensable preliminary to an attack upon Moldavia. While
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it remained untaken, no supplies from the Bog or the Dniester could be depended upon; the intercourse between the Crimea and the western coasts of the Black Sea was insecure; nay, so much was Prince Potemkin, the great instigator of the present Empress in her plans upon Turkey, convinced of the importance of this territory, that he openly professed his determination not to hazard an attack upon Constantinople, till he should previously have made himself master of Oczakow.

If such was the value of Oczakow when Poland was subservient to Russia, how much must every inconvenience I have mentioned have increased, when that Republic became numbered among her foes? Unable any longer to avail herself of the facility of transporting her armies across its territory; deprived of all the supplies she had been accustomed to draw from it, and even open to an attack upon her forces; harrassed by fatiguing marches, and exposed to all the evils resulting from their being in a remote and hostile country; Oczakow became doubly important to her, as the only means of connecting the theatre of her military efforts with those provinces from which she could draw her supplies, and as the only medium through which an attack upon Moldavia could be conducted and supported. In a word, Oczakow in the hands of the Turks, if connected with Poland,

Poland, is a barrier hardly, if at all, to be obviated by Russia.

In either case, therefore, it is evident, that, upon the possession of Oczakow, the success of the Russian views upon Constantinople absolutely depends. As the key of the Crimea, it facilitates the formation of a navy, and furnishes all the means of attack : as connecting the dominions of Russia with the coasts of Moldavia, it gives a freedom of access favourable to the operation both of her fleets and armies ; it obviates all the dangers attendant on the prosecution of a remote war ; it opens great and inexhaustible sources of supply ; and it operates as a check upon Poland, which must produce the effect of preventing her, however she may be disposed or connected, from attempting any thing which may impede the Russian progress.

But the advantages attending the possession of Oczakow by Russia are not confined to the material points I have already mentioned : they apply to others of very great importance, upon which I propose to touch in my next letter.

ALFRED.

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LETTER

LETTER XXXVI.

SIR,

I HAVE shewn that Oczakow, in the hands of Russia, would not only facilitate in a material degree her communication with the Turkish coasts of the Black Sea, but would operate as a complete check upon Poland, in any war she might be engaged in with the Turks. These, however, are not all the advantages she must derive from such a possession. From its situation, the District of Oczakow must enable Russia to impede, if not to destroy, the freedom of the Dniester; the only southern channel by which the productions of Poland can be exported, or by which her commerce can be carried on. We cannot be ignorant of the views of Russia with regard to that country, or of the invariable tendency of her operations for the purpose of obtaining an influence over it, amounting in its effect to an entire and despotic dominion. We have traced the steps which her Imperial Majesty took in the partition and subsequent government of that country; and we have

have seen how the diversion of her forces in the Turkish war afforded an opportunity to the discontented Poles, of shaking off her yoke, and of forming, under the auspices of Prussia, a free constitution and a formidable army. Obligated by necessity to give way to circumstances which she could not prevent, but impelled by every motive of ambition and interest to recover the dominion she had lost, her penetrating mind discovered, in the possession of Oczakow and its District, the speedy and infallible means, of not only regaining her superiority in Poland, but of operating so forcibly on the interests of that country, as to put it out of its power any more to emancipate itself. She knew, that, while the Porte possessed Oczakow and its District, it had the sole command of the Dniester from its mouth to the Polish frontier; and that, consequently, she had not the means of influencing or impeding the commercial arrangements of that country; she was also sensible, that, by transferring this province from the Turks to herself, she would obtain the double advantage—of being able to operate both upon Poland and Turkey, by preventing any Polish traffic through the Dniester, as she already was able to do through the Bog and the Dnieper; and of securing an influence in Poland, which might command its richest provinces, and which might draw a very disproportionate share

of its commerce into the Black Sea, to the evident detriment of any commercial arrangements which England and Prussia might make with Poland.

These were additional reasons for inducing the Empress to obtain the possession of Oczakow and its District; the value of which she well knew, and which she wisely considered as a complete indemnification for all the expences and losses of the war. Compelled by the interference of the allies, by the dereliction of the Emperor, and by the exhausted state of her finances, to abandon for the present her hopes of taking Constantinople, nothing, under those circumstances, could be so advantageous to her, as the attainment of a territory, which, at a more favourable moment, would ensure the completion of that enterprize, and which, in the mean time, would afford her the facility of availing herself of every advantage which could be derived from the Crimea and from Poland.

It cannot be doubted that the Empress attached an additional importance to the possession of Oczakow and its District, from the hope it held out to her of promoting those other vast plans of aggrandizement, to which, in a former letter, I alluded. The formation of a fleet in the Black Sea, and the possession of Constantinople, were sought

sought for but as the means of further conquests and still greater advantages. The dominion of the Archipelago, and of Egypt, was the immediate consequence to which she looked; while in a remoter, though in no very distant point of view, the dominion of the Mediterranean—of the Red Sea—of the Persian Gulph—and of all the adjoining shores, was contemplated. Wild and romantic as such projects may be thought, and eagerly as they undoubtedly will be contradicted by those who have reasons for asserting the moderation of the Russian system, nothing can be more true, than that such projects have long been formed, and that efforts have not been wanting prematurely to carry them into effect. We know, from indisputable authority, the intrigues which Russia carried on with the revolted Beys in Egypt, and the efforts she made to subvert the Turkish power in that country, at a time when she had neither the means of connecting it with her other dominions, or of maintaining herself in the possession of it, had her endeavours to obtain it proved successful. It is no less certain, that the dominion of the Red Sea, of the Persian Gulph, and of the countries on either side of them, has been the serious object of Russian ambition. To monopolize the commerce of both those seas; to establish an emporium at Bussora, and thus to govern one channel of communication with the

East, and to influence, perhaps to subdue, the kingdom of Persia, have for some time been settled plans, which would ere this, in all probability, have been realized, had not the attention of the Empress been otherwise directed; but which, there is every reason to believe, will be resumed, whenever a favourable opportunity may present itself.

The fair deduction from what I have said in this, and in my preceding letters, is, that Oczakow and its District, in the hands of Russia, must be the great and immediate means of forming an irresistible naval force; the operation of which must be, in the highest degree, injurious to the existing maritime powers, and especially to Great Britain: that it facilitates the conquest of Constantinople, and the expulsion of the Turks from Europe; by which, instead of a people from whom England has nothing to dread, a new power will be established in the most central and critical point, possessed of all the resources which can render them formidable, and habituated to the execution of plans, the direct tendency of which is the overthrow of every existing system, and the destruction of those interests, which on every account we ought the most to value: and that it must give to Russia a decided command over Poland, and the means of either impeding the
commerce

commerce of that country, or of restraining it to such channels as may best conduce to the views of the Russian Court.

In the course of this investigation, I have confined myself, as strictly as possible, to a detail of facts; and I now submit to the public the reasons on which is founded that opinion, which I stated myself to have formed, that His Majesty's ministers were justified in the resolution they had adopted, of preventing the Empress of Russia from making the acquisition of a province, so essentially necessary to the furtherance of her views of aggrandizement, and consequently so replete with mischief to the dearest interests of Great Britain, and so evidently dangerous to the general balance of Europe.

ALFRED,

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LETTER

LETTER XXXVII.

SIR,

IT was on the 28th of March 1791, that the King's message was delivered to parliament; stating that, as the endeavours which His Majesty had used, in conjunction with his allies, to effect a pacification between Russia and the Porte, had not proved successful, His Majesty judged it requisite, in order to add weight to his representations, to make some further augmentation to his naval force.

Having already gone so much at length into a detail of the reasons on which this measure was grounded, and as the debates which were occasioned by it are in every one's hands, I do not mean, in this place, to detain your readers by a recapitulation of arguments, which, from the caution necessary on the one side, and the license of wild assertion on the other, can, at this moment, be but little interesting. As it is, however, by no means my wish to suppress, or to misrepresent, the grounds on which the opposition

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tion to this measure was founded—for indeed the more they are canvassed, the more empty and insufficient they must appear—I beg leave to state the resolutions, which the adversaries of government thought proper to bring forward on this subject. Though they were negatived upon a division, it is certain that they, in a great degree, contributed to mislead the good sense of the nation, and to occasion the unfortunate termination of a negotiation, on the success of which materially depended the welfare and prosperity of this country.

The first resolution was:—"That it is at all times, and particularly under the present circumstances, the interest of this country to preserve peace."

To this I reply—It is not at all times the interest of England to preserve peace. A general proposition of this sort is nonsense. Because peace is better than war, it undoubtedly must be the wish of every one to avoid an interruption of it; but, if it is to be preserved only on such terms as are degrading to the national dignity, or at the risk of losing the great and permanent interests of a country, the preservation of peace is no longer desirable: on the contrary, it becomes in itself an evil of the greatest magnitude; for it sacrifices the greater good for the lesser; it gives up,

up, for a temporary and uncertain indulgence, the real interests and solid advantages of a wise and regulated system; it surrenders every thing honourable, profitable and safe, for a precarious respite from toil and danger; and it is, moreover, contradictory to every principle by which good governments have hitherto been conducted, and to that conduct, by which our own country has, in a pre-eminent degree, risen to its present unrivalled state of prosperity and grandeur. So far from this general proposition being true, it is demonstrably certain that many cases may arise, in which it is the interest of a country to go to war. It is so, whenever the general system of Europe is endangered by the aggression of any of the leading Powers; whenever any State, already formidable by its strength and resources, is likely to become still more so, at the expence of another State, on whose political existence and relative situation the balance of Europe depends; and it is especially so, when the plans of aggrandizement so pursued are evidently the result of a settled system, in its principle, and in every instance of its prosecution, inimical to the interests of the nation to which the alternative of peace or war is thus submitted.

Such being the general principle, let me refer to all that I have said on the subject of the Russian plans, as a convincing proof of the futi-
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lity of the second branch of this resolution—namely, that, under the existing circumstances, when the King's message was delivered to parliament, it was particularly the interest of this country to preserve peace. On a fair review of those circumstances, I challenge any one to maintain that proposition. It is decidedly untrue, and is contradicted by a series of evidence, which must carry with it conviction, even to those, who, for party purposes, ventured to obtrude their unfounded assertions and their flimsy arguments upon a public, uninformed of the real state of facts, and unhappily too open to the arts which were employed to mislead it.

The second resolution was—"That it is neither reasonable or just to take up arms for the purpose of dictating terms of peace between two nations engaged in hostilities, without any reference either to the cause of the disputes, or the cause of the war."

I shall not enquire whether this resolution, as an abstract proposition, is true or false. Considered as a ground of objection to the measures proposed by government, it is perfectly inapplicable and absurd. If, without referring to the cause of the disputes, or the circumstances of the war, it is unjust to interfere between belligerent Powers,

Powers, it necessarily follows, that such a measure is just, if the cause of the disputes and the circumstances of the war are referred to. In the present case, nothing can be so certain, as that both these points were distinctly referred to; that they were as distinctly known; and that they had been acted upon from the beginning of the war to the moment when these resolutions were brought forward. The cause of the disputes was the ambition and unjust aggression of Russia; which compelled the Turks to exert themselves in their own defence, for the purpose of saving themselves from destruction. The circumstances of the war were the victories and conquests of Russia; the weakness and danger of the Turks; and the imminent risk of Constantinople being taken, and of the establishment of a Russian maritime power in the South of Europe. In the terms of the resolution itself, therefore, the objection to the measure was futile; and the only inference which can fairly be drawn from it is, that the measure was just, and that it was proved to be so by the very argument which was brought against it.

The third resolution was—"That the refusal
" of an offer of mediation is no just cause of war."

This is another abstract proposition, of about
as much consequence as the preceding. The re-
fusal

refusal of an offer of mediation may, according to
 circumstances, be a just, or an unjust cause of
 war. When the inhabitants of Otaheite were en-
 gaged in a war with those of the neighbouring
 island Ulietea, Captain Cook very properly re-
 fused to take any part in the quarrel, because he
 was sensible, he neither had, nor could have any
 interest in the event of the dispute. If the
 Emperor of China were to engage in a war with
 the Emperor of Japan, I certainly should think it
 would be extremely absurd for the Emperor of
 Germany, or for the Swiss Cantons, to take a part
 with any of the belligerent Powers, or even to
 propose a mediation for the purpose of terminat-
 ing their disputes, because they could not have
 any interest in them; and it would be still more
 unjustifiable, in such cases, to go to war with any
 of those Powers for refusing an offer of media-
 tion, should it have been made. So far the reso-
 lution in question may have weight; but it loses
 its force when applied to those cases where the
 mediating Power has an interest in the event of
 the war; and it becomes proportionably weak, as
 that interest increases. In the question of the
 mediation of the allies, for the purpose of ter-
 minating the Turkish war, it fades away to no-
 thing: for, in that case, the interest both of Eng-
 land and of Prussia was nearly equal to that of
 either of the belligerent Powers; and therefore,

upon

upon every principle laid down by the best writers on the law of nations, and upon every principle of good policy and common sense, England and Prussia were not only completely justified in insisting forcibly on the mediation they had so long proposed; but would have been equally justified in commencing a war, for the purpose of protecting their immediate interests, and of preventing a change in the system of Europe, so evidently detrimental and dangerous to them both as that which it was the avowed intention of Russia to bring about.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVIII.

SIR,

THE fourth and fifth resolutions brought forward as a ground of objection to the measure proposed by government, were—" That, during the
" progress of the war between Russia and the
" Porte, and since the taking of Oczakow, this
" house has received repeated assurances from the
" throne, that the situation of affairs continued
" to promise to this country the uninterrupted
" enjoyment of the blessings of peace :"

And—" That, convinced of the truth of the
" assurances which we have received from the
" throne, this house has hitherto considered the
" interests of Great Britain as not likely to be
" affected by the progress of the Russian arms
" on the borders of the Black Sea."

The only answer which these resolutions deserve, is an exact transcript of those parts of His Majesty's speeches, pronounced since the period
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of the taking of Oczakow, which in any respect relate to the existing state of foreign affairs.

Oczakow was taken by the Russians in the campaign of 1788. In consequence of His Majesty's indisposition, no speech was made from the throne when parliament met at the end of that year. Upon His Majesty's recovery, the Lord Chancellor, as one of the commissioners, made a speech to the two houses, in which the following notice is taken of the state of foreign politics :

“ His Majesty has ordered us to acquaint you,
 “ that—His Majesty's endeavours were employed
 “ during the last summer, in conjunction with his
 “ allies, in order to prevent, as much as possible,
 “ the extension of hostilities in the North, and
 “ to manifest the desire of effecting a general pa-
 “ cification; that no opportunity will be neglected
 “ on his part, to promote this salutary object;
 “ and that he has, in the mean time, the satisfac-
 “ tion of receiving from all foreign courts con-
 “ tinued assurances of their friendly dispositions
 “ to this country.”

At the close of this session in August 1789, the Lord Chancellor again addressed the two houses by His Majesty's command, and acquainted them,
 that

that—" Although the good offices of His Majesty and his allies had not hitherto been effectual for restoring the general tranquillity of Europe, His Majesty had the satisfaction of seeing, that the further extension of hostilities had been prevented, and that the situation of affairs continued to promise to this country, the uninterrupted enjoyment of the blessings of peace."

Such were the speeches in the year 1789. In the first, it is stated, that foreign courts continued to give assurances of their friendly disposition; in the second, the precise words contained in the resolution before us are to be found; but they are accompanied with the information, that the good offices of His Majesty and his allies had been ineffectual for restoring the general tranquillity of Europe, although the further extension of hostilities had been prevented. These latter words evidently allude to the attempt which had been made upon Sweden by Denmark, and which, as we have seen, was put a stop to by His Majesty's interposition.

When this speech was made, nothing can be more certain than that the situation of affairs was such, as fairly to promise a continuation of the peace which this country enjoyed. Oczakow, in-

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deed,

deed, had been taken ; but the successes of the two Imperial courts had been counterbalanced by several checks, which made the event of the war extremely doubtful. Great Britain and Prussia, it is true, had offered their mediation ; but they had not gone further ; nor was there any ground for apprehending, that the reverses of fortune, on the part of Turkey, would be such, as in any degree to endanger the relative situation of the allies.

At the opening of the session, on the 21st of January 1790, the King thus expressed himself :
 —“ Since I last met you in parliament, the continuance of the war on the continent, and the internal situation of different parts of Europe, have been productive of events which have engaged my most serious attention. While I see, with a just concern, the interruption of the tranquillity of other countries, I have had, at the same time, great satisfaction in being able to acquaint you, that I receive continued assurances of the good disposition of all foreign Powers towards these kingdoms.”

When this speech was made, the state of the war was little different from what it had been in the preceding autumn.—His Majesty, however, informed his people, that the events which had occurred,

occurred, had engaged his most serious attention. The only inference which could be drawn from this was, that those events were of a nature to interest this country; that they were important to its prosperity and welfare; and that therefore it had become necessary to watch their progress and effects. His Majesty also adverted to the internal situation of France, another of those objects which was growing into a national concern. No one can be ignorant, how seriously the state of that country is at this moment implicated with the dearest interests of Great Britain. The revolution in France had taken place six months before this speech was made. Will any one venture to assert, that the subsequent course of events, which have brought us into a war with that Power, could then have been foreseen; or that the pacific assurances which His Majesty states himself to have received from France, as well as from all other foreign Powers, ought to have been considered as empty and vain, because, at the end of about two years after that period, the conduct of the French government became such as to compel us to arm in our own defence? Among the very strange propositions advanced on the side of opposition, since the opening of the present session, no one has thought proper to risk so absurd an idea. Yet such was precisely, and *in terminis*, the argument which was brought to prove, that,

because Oczakow had been taken in 1788, and because the King, in 1789, assured his people, that the situation of affairs at that time continued to promise to this country the uninterrupted enjoyment of the blessings of peace, His Majesty had given reason to imagine that his kingdoms were not likely to be affected by the progress of the Russian arms in 1791.

In his speech at the close of this session, on the 10th of June 1790, the only notice which His Majesty took of continental affairs was the following: " I trust that our mutual good understanding and concert (i. e. of His Majesty and his allies) will be productive of the happiest effects in the present conjuncture of affairs in Europe."

From this no inference whatever can be drawn; and therefore no observation need be made.

In the course of the following summer, as we have seen, the aspect of the Turkish war had materially changed. The King of Prussia had taken the field, and had compelled the Emperor to make a peace; while Russia, bent upon following up her successful operations, had made such near approaches to Constantinople, and had obtained such an ascendancy over the Turks, as to warrant
a well-

a well-grounded apprehension, that nothing but an immediate and vigorous interposition could save them from absolute destruction. His Majesty therefore, in his speech at the opening of the session, on the 26th of November 1790, after informing his parliament of what related to the Emperor, and of the negociation in which he was engaged for the conclusion of a separate peace between his Imperial Majesty and the Turks, proceeds to speak of Russia in the following words:

“ A separate peace has taken place between
 “ Russia and Sweden ; but the war between the
 “ former of those Powers and the Porte still continues. The principles on which I have hitherto
 “ acted, will make me always desirous of employing the weight and influence of this country
 “ in contributing to the restoration of general
 “ tranquillity.”

In this speech, His Majesty directly alludes to the negociation then depending with Russia ; and the terms of this allusion distinctly shew the probability there was of an approaching necessity of employing the weight, as well as the influence of this country, to bring it to a conclusion. It is also observable, that no hint is given of the likelihood of a continuance of peace.

Such, Sir, were all the speeches made from the throne, from the taking of Oczakow to the deli-

very of the royal message. In only one of them, and that made in the summer 1789, an inference is drawn from the situation of affairs of the probability of the continuance of peace.

The indignation I feel, at the groundless and shameful reflection attempted to be cast by the resolutions in question, makes me abstain from saying more on a subject, which naturally leads to reflections unsuited to the calm discussion of political occurrences. I earnestly hope that the public will compare the speeches themselves, and the events which occasioned them, with the representation made of them in these resolutions. Nothing more can be necessary to place in their true point of view the conduct and the principles of the faction, which could descend to such indecent misrepresentations for the furtherance of a party purpose.

The sixth resolution was—"That we are not bound by any treaty to furnish assistance to any of our allies, except in the case of an attack upon them."

My answer to this will be short.—Though we might not be called upon by treaty to arm, we were bound to do so in support of the balance of Europe, and of our own safety. I have already enlarged so much upon this point, that it will be unne-

unnecessary for me to add any thing more on a proposition so evident, and so impossible to be refuted.

The seventh resolution was—"That none of the possessions of this country, or any of its allies, appear to be threatened with an hostile attack from any foreign nation."

For a complete answer to this resolution also, I beg leave to refer to my preceding letters. It would be trifling with the public attention to recapitulate a series of facts and arguments, the direct tendency of which is to prove the reality of those dangers, the non-existence of which the artful wording of this resolution endeavours, by implication, to insinuate. I will only observe, that His Majesty's ministers never asserted the probability of an immediate attack either upon Great Britain, or its allies; but they did assert, and they asserted truly, that the success of Russia in the affair of Oczakow was likely, in its consequences, to affect the best and dearest interests of both.

The eighth, and last resolution was—"That the expence of an armament must be burdensome to the country; and is, under the present cir-

“ cumstances, as far as this house is informed,
 “ highly inexpedient and unnecessary.”

The first branch of this resolution is the old and hacknied ground of opposition, upon every question of a similar nature. It is an admirable instrument of offence; for it is a truism which no one can dispute. Like all truisms, however, it proves no more than itself. When it is once affirmed that the expence of an armament is burdensome, no one is much the wiser for being told that, which every one already knew as well as the sage who uttered it. To convert it into an argument, it is necessary to shew, that the object in contemplation is of no importance; that it is not connected with the interests and welfare of the country; and that these would continue secure and unaffected, were no such measure to be adopted. If all this be not proved, the assertion before us is absurdity and idle prattle. The public, possessed as it is of the causes of this armament, and of the motives of government, will undoubtedly determine justly upon this point.

As to the second branch of this resolution, which states the ignorance of parliament as its reason for thinking the armament highly inexpedient and unnecessary, I shall leave the propriety
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of it to the consideration of those who advanced and supported it. The House of Commons appeared to be but little flattered with the compliment; for, in spite of every effort which could be exerted, this and the seven accompanying resolutions were negatived by a majority of eighty.

ALFRED.

LETTER XXXIX.

SIR,

THE event of the business into which I have entered so much at length is well known. Clear as was the propriety of the measure brought forward by government, the clamour and the arts of faction succeeded for the moment, in misleading the honest judgment of the public, and in prostrating Great Britain at the feet of Russia.—Those, who so long and so unsuccessfully had opposed the measures of His Majesty's government, perceived that now the opportunity was arrived,
when

when a national ferment might be produced, by which the plan brought forward by administration might be defeated, and the tide of popularity might be diverted into a channel more propitious to their wishes. They seized the glorious, golden opportunity; and, with the confidence of approaching victory, they triumphantly entered the lists, to fight the cause of Russia against England. While they drove impetuously to their end, they were little delicate as to the means by which it was to be obtained. While they operated on the public mind by declamation, sophistry and misrepresentation, they did not neglect the surer resources of confidential intercourse and diplomatic manœuvre. They felt that their efforts in parliament had so diminished the numbers of those, whose sense of the general interests of their country had induced them to approve of what His Majesty's ministers had proposed, that the success of hostilities against Russia had become too precarious to be depended upon. They were aware that nothing remained to administration, but the feeble hope of accomplishing that by negotiation, which must have been carried by employing the energy and resources of Great Britain. Bold from their recent and unforeseen success, they therefore determined to continue their attack, and to frustrate even this remaining chance of preserving the national honour, and the interests of Europe.

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What were the means which they adopted for this purpose? Negotiation opposed to negotiation, and ambassador to ambassador! *Ob pudor!* *Ob prisca fides!* Oh miserable prostitution of British character and British glory!

Let us spare ourselves the pain of pursuing this dishonourable recital. The circumstances of it are too well known. Would to God! the event of it had been less hurtful to the best interests of our country. Fortified in her resistance to the demands of England, by such a public and infallible token of the reliance she might have on the devotion and support of a powerful English faction, the Empress refused to accede to the wise and moderate proposals which had been made to her: she rejected every modification of her proud demand: she finally succeeded to the extent of her wishes, by the attainment of Oczakow and its District, which put the fate of Constantinople, perhaps of Europe itself, into her hands.

The faction, having thus prevailed, now looked to reap the harvest they so industriously had sown. They stretched forth their hands to seize the reins of government; which, weakened and humbled as it might be by the measures they had pursued, still held out to them the rich and flattering prospect of influence, salary, and power. The phantom,

tom, however, in the pursuit of which they had sacrificed so much, now faded from their grasp. The people of England, though led by them to deny that full and decided support without which no war can be carried on, had now reflected upon what had past, and had done justice to the purity and good intentions of those to whom the administration of affairs had been entrusted. They distinguished between a measure of which they had been induced to think ill, and the motives of those who had proposed it. A long experience had convinced them, that the good of their country was the object which the King's ministers invariably had in view. They reflected on their long and prosperous administration; and saw, in every step of it, order arising from confusion, confidence taking the place of distrust, and wealth, glory and prosperity, succeeding to poverty, disgrace and despondency. They drew a parallel between those to whom these blessings were to be ascribed, and those by whom every measure brought forward for the welfare and reputation of their country had invariably been opposed. Unconvinced as they might be of the expediency of risking a war, they beheld with indignation the arts and the means which had been employed to defeat it. They reflected on the relative conduct of the two parties; and the comparison left no doubt on which side the national support ought

to be given. His Majesty's ministers continued to enjoy the esteem and confidence of the country, for which they had done so much ; and to preside over the councils of a kingdom, which they had raised to a pre-eminence of weight and glory : while the worthy labours of their opponents received their merited return—the marked and augmented disapprobation of the present age, and the certain censure and abhorrence of posterity.

ALFRED.

LETIER

LETTER XL.

SIR,

WHEN the new system, which this unlooked-for and unhappy opposition to the measures of government had compelled His Majesty's ministers to adopt, was operating as far as possible to maintain the national credit, and to procure such terms for the Porte as might save it from the imminent danger with which it was threatened; the disappointment he had experienced in a point so connected with his feelings, his interests, and his honour, appeared very sensibly to affect the King of Prussia. Encouraged to persevere against Russia by the success of his recent negotiation with the Emperor, and confident with reason in the strength of his well appointed army, and the greatness of his treasure and resources, he could ill bear the disappointment of his favourite plan of curbing the ambition and restraining the aggrandizement of a rival Power, whose interests were so inimical to his own, and whose success in her views upon Turkey, now rendered certain
by

by what had occurred in England, threatened an accession of force, which necessarily would militate against him, and affect him in those points in which he was the most easily to be injured. Under these circumstances, and ignorant how far the events which had taken place in England might affect the sentiment of the people, or might operate on the alliance which subsisted between him and this country, it cannot be thought surprising, that his Prussian Majesty, in a moment of disappointment and disgust, should have turned his thoughts to those other means of accomplishing his views and consolidating his interests, which the aspect of affairs in England seemed for the moment ill calculated to support, but which he conceived he might be able to find by the arrangement of a new connexion, and by the formation of an alliance with another Power, which already courted his friendship, and presented to his view new prospects of advantage and glory.

The Emperor Leopold, attentive to every circumstance which could forward the execution of the mighty plans he had in view, soon perceived that the favourable moment was arrived for the attainment of an object, which his penetrating sagacity pointed out to him as the means of effecting all that his warmest hopes had ever led him to expect. Suffering under the feeble and misguided
policy

policy of his predecessor; compelled by his relative weakness to submit to the ascendancy of Prussia; sensible of the degrading step that weakness had made it necessary for him to take—he naturally longed for the moment, when circumstances might enable him to reduce the superior force of his antagonist. He felt too the fallen and calamitous state of the Royal Family of France: the ties of blood, and the indignant pity which, both as a monarch and as a brother, filled his breast, when he reflected on their hard and unmerited sufferings, naturally called upon him to vindicate their cause, to save them from the destruction which appeared ready to overwhelm them, and to inflict a severe vengeance on those, who, having usurped the powers of government in France, openly avowed their design of spreading through Europe their fraternity of fanaticism and anarchy. His Imperial Majesty also had neither forgotten nor abandoned those favourite plans of connecting his dominions, and concentrating his forces, which so long had engaged the attention of the Austrian cabinet. He felt the incumbrance of the Netherlands, and perceived the innumerable advantages which would result from an exchange of those distant provinces for the electorate of Bavaria. He saw the time was come, when, by availing himself of the temporary impulse upon the King of Prussia, occasioned by
what

what had happened in England, he might do more for the permanent advantage of Austria than his warmest hopes could ever have warranted him to expect; that he might at once gratify every view he entertained, of accomplishing his own wishes, and of diminishing the weight and the resources of Prussia. He reflected, that this monarchy, raised by good management and a strict attention to œconomy and military discipline, had become formidable from the circumstance of its being enabled, by its situation, to operate as a check upon both the Imperial courts. The recent events, and especially the transactions at Reichenbach, had proved, that it was able to act against them with an energy not to be resisted, especially when aided by an alliance with England and Holland. His Imperial Majesty also knew, that the King of Prussia had succeeded, on the death of the late King, to a treasure of fifteen millions sterling; and that, though the campaign in Holland, and the armament in 1790, had probably consumed a part of it, an immense sum yet remained, perfectly at his disposal, to be employed on any service his interests might make advisable. Nor was the state of the Prussian army less formidable than the other circumstances I have mentioned. With more than two hundred thousand well disciplined and well appointed soldiers, the King of Prussia undoubtedly possessed

an army superior to any other European Monarch ; and as it was known that he by no means wanted an inclination to employ a force, the very appearance of which had so lately carried with it an ascendancy which his Imperial Majesty had felt to be irresistible, this circumstance became a further cause of apprehension, and proportionably weighed upon his mind.

To reduce this army, by engaging it in a distant war ; to dissipate the treasure by which it was maintained, and from which its restoration (should it once be affected) could alone be depended upon ; to remove the attention and the forces of the King of Prussia from the side of Poland, where they were essentially necessary for the perfecting and consolidating of the new constitution, which had been framed under the auspices of that Monarch ; to weaken the bonds of intimate union which subsisted between Prussia, England and Holland ; and, by an alliance with the very Power against which all these views were directed, to gain such an accession of force as promised an infallible success to the measures he had projected against France—these great and contradictory objects presented such a mass of difficulties, as ordinary capacities could never have combined, and ordinary courage would never have undertaken. Before the capacity and the
courage

courage of Leopold, however, those difficulties vanished. Endowed with those talents which enabled him with ease to adapt himself to varying circumstances; concealing beneath the mask of openness and candour a subtlety unknown to modern politicians; perfectly acquainted with the characters and foibles of those with whom he had to treat, while over his own was cast an impenetrable veil; the Emperor, after a few months negotiation, successfully accomplished his plan, by signing at Pilnitz, on the 27th of August 1791, a convention with the King of Prussia.

The consequences of this event are too recent, and too well known, to make it necessary for me to enter into a minute detail of them. With respect to one of them—the war undertaken against France—I have, for various reasons, abstained throughout my letters from entering into its discussion. However material it undoubtedly has all along been to this country, it has already been treated of, so ably and so distinctly, by many others, that I was unwilling to enter upon a subject with which all your readers must already be so well acquainted. I shall therefore merely observe, that the hopes of the Emperor were, in this respect, completely realized, by the active and strenuous part which the King of Prussia took in that war. It may perhaps be equally true, that

the other points of weakening the Prussian army, and of dissipating the Prussian treasure, have been also accomplished. That whatever hopes he had formed, of defeating all the plans which had operated so powerfully in favour of the new constitution of Poland, have been equally realized, the present forlorn and desolate state of that unhappy country too forcibly proves. In one respect, and in one only, the Emperor's expectations failed of the success he had promised himself. He did not succeed in dissolving, or even in weakening the alliance between Prussia, England and Holland. That happy union, founded on a basis too strong to be affected by slight disgusts or temporary projects, resisted every attack of its artful invader. It still subsists, and we may confidently predict, it will still continue to subsist, and, by its superior weight, to carry with it that energy, which can alone arise from a consolidation of mutual and unjarring interests, and from a harmony of councils directed to one great common object, that of maintaining their individual prosperity, and the general balance and security of Europe.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XLL

SIR,

IT is now time to return to the affairs of Poland, and to trace the consequences of those measures which the Poles had taken to ensure, by the act of the 3d of May 1791, the liberty and the constitution of their country,

With minds impressed by the noblest feelings of patriotism and independence, and conscious of the purity of their own intentions, the Poles did credit to the motives and professions of the King of Prussia ; by whose advice they had thrown off the yoke of Russia ; with whose concurrence they had new modelled their Republic, and declared their monarchy hereditary : and by the assistance of whom they depended upon realizing all those plans of national prosperity and well-tempered freedom, which had so explicitly received his sanction. Gallant and honourable themselves, they subscribed to the gallantry and honour of their ally : incapable of deceit, and disdaining the sem-

blance of falsehood, they acted with implicit faith on the solemn assurance of approbation and support which the King of Prussia had so often gratuitously made them. They communicated to him all their plans; and they pursued none to which his sanction had not previously been given. They new-modelled their army, in conformity with his advice; and they carried their confidence in his wisdom and their dependence on his friendly discretion to such a length, as, in spite of all the suggestions of ordinary prudence, to defer making official communications of the act of the 3d of May to the other European courts, till his Prussian Majesty condescended to tell them he thought the proper period for so doing was arrived.

Such was the amicable footing and good understanding of the two courts, till the interview between the Emperor and the King of Prussia took place at Pilnitz. The intelligence of that occurrence was received in Poland with joy. Satisfied of the integrity of their ally, the Poles reflected with exultation and rapture on the consequences of a personal meeting between him and the Emperor, whose friendship and protection it was so much their interest to gain, and which they now conceived must certainly be secured, as the conference was held in the palace, and in the presence of

of the Elector of Saxony, to whom, under the guidance of Prussia, they had offered their hereditary crown. They reflected with much satisfaction on those intimate bonds of union, which subsisted between the courts of Berlin and Dresden, and which they knew the court of Vienna had on every occasion respected. All these circumstances added to the confidence of Poland; and her hopes of increasing the number of her friends, and of consolidating, beyond all danger of disappointment, her new constitution, received additional force from the convention signed at Vienna by Monsieur Bischoffwerder, and by the formal treaty of alliance which was concluded between Austria and Prussia. They now believed they had nothing to fear. His Prussian Majesty was an honourable man; he was the friend and protector of Poland; and his allies of course would prove its friends and protectors too.

The immediate consequences of the interview at Pilnitz tended to confirm these flattering expectations. The Elector, who till then had received less warmly than they had expected the dazzling offer of an hereditary crown (apparently intimidated by the difficulty of obtaining the concurrence of the two Imperial courts) now seemed to have overcome his apprehensions, and to be disposed in good earnest to conclude a business in which he had so material an interest. A negotia-

tion was formally opened for this purpose at Dresden. Commissaries were sent from Warsaw. The ministers of the Elector proposed the conditions on which their master was ready to accept of the proffered sovereignty, and the modifications which he desired should be made in the newly arranged government. All these circumstances amounted to a conviction of the interest the King of Prussia took in the welfare of Poland, and of the active steps he had taken to induce the Elector to ascend the throne of that country, and to consolidate and secure the new constitution.

Nor did the death of the Emperor Leopold appear to have occasioned any material alteration in the system, which had been adopted by the courts of Vienna and Berlin. The new Emperor inherited, and seemed even to improve upon the connexion which had been formed between his father and the King of Prussia. The negotiation between the Elector and the Poles continued to advance, on the basis of the most formal and solemn assurances on the part of the King of Prussia, not only of his acquiescence in it, but of his warm and zealous interest for the successful termination of the points in discussion.

To such a length, indeed, was the friendship and cordiality of the King of Prussia carried, that even the rumours of the Empress of Russia's dissatis-

satisfaction at what had passed, served but the more strongly to evince them. The apprehension of the consequences, which might ensue to them from her Imperial Majesty's displeasure, naturally alarmed the Poles, who dreaded it in proportion as they had experienced the burthen of her protection. They therefore communicated their fears to the King of Prussia: and received from him the comfortable assurance, that nothing was to be apprehended from that quarter; that every thing was understood between his Majesty and the Empress; and that therefore the Republic might quiet its alarm, since even the possibility of any hostile measures did not exist.

The intelligence from St. Petersburg, however, grew every day more and more alarming. It was now known, that some dissatisfied members of the Republic had found refuge with the Empress, and that she had given them hopes of a speedy and effectual interference in their favour. Intelligence had also been received, that the Russian forces were actually in motion, and that various detachments of them had marched to the confines of the Republic. In the moment of alarm, the King of Poland and his ministers resorted to their faithful ally. They called officially upon the Prussian minister at Warsaw, and upon the cabinet of Berlin itself, for a clear and explicit declaration

ration of the sentiments and intentions of his Prussian Majesty; and they requested to be informed, what plan of concert and co-operation he would be pleased to propose, for averting the impending danger, and for preventing or for opposing with effect the hostilities with which they appeared to be threatened by Russia.

The King of Prussia, firm to his engagements, assured his republican friends, that, should the Empress of Russia think proper to march her troops into Poland, he would scrupulously fulfill the engagements he had contracted with them, as became a good and faithful ally.

Such was the conduct of the King of Prussia towards Poland, and such, as I have represented them, were his avowed sentiments, so late as the beginning of May 1792.

ALFRED.

LETTER

LETTER XLII.

SIR,

WE left the Poles basking in the favour of the King of Prussia, and depending upon him for protection against the designs of the Empress. Confident of his support, they cheerfully proceeded in the necessary work of bringing into action the force which they felt they possessed. They assiduously augmented their army; they drew forth gallant bands of free and loyal soldiers, who considered the interests of their King and their country as their own; and who knew, that the existence of their own liberties and happiness depended on the preservation of the constitution they had acquired, and of the throne of the Monarch to whom they were indebted for it. They brought forward every resource which their circumstances would admit of; and, with a spirit worthy of a better fate, the nobles and representatives of the people, assembled in the Diet, promulgated a decree, or act of defence, which at once manifested the justice of the cause
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in which they were engaged, and their settled purpose to maintain it.

This act, which passed on the 16th of April 1792, was formally communicated on the 18th to all the foreign ministers resident at Warsaw. It was received very favourably by them all, especially by the Marquis de Lucchesini, the minister of the King of Prussia, who was known to be admitted to his most secret councils, and to be perfectly acquainted with his real intentions. It was therefore not at all surprizing, that the King of Poland and his ministers, who had so much reason to be assured of the King of Prussia's friendship, as well as so strong an interest to act in a manner agreeable to his inclinations, exerted themselves to discover how that Monarch approved of this act, and to what extent they might depend upon his friendly aid in the prosecution of the hostilities which now appeared to be immediate. M. de Lucchesini, in answer to the questions of this nature, which at different times were put to him, replied with great diplomatic discretion, and in a manner which shewed that he had been very properly selected as the minister of the King of Prussia to the court of Warsaw, at this particular moment, when the danger to be apprehended from Russia was becoming imminent, and when, for various reasons, his Prussian Majesty thought
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it advisable to alter the line of conduct he had so long and so earnestly observed. Some little attentions are due to departing friendship; and the Marquis de Lucchesini was not wanting in them. At first, his language was general. He abstained, indeed, from repeating those assurances of support, of which he before had been so liberal; but he was extremely polite in the recommendation he gave to the King of Poland and his ministers, to endeavour to humour the Empress's little caprices, and that kind of vanity which it was so natural for a great and humane Princess to feel; and by no means to take any steps which might be attended with the unpleasant consequence of indisposing her against them. When he was pressed to speak a little more plainly about the act of defence, he by no means blamed or objected to it; he declared it to be his opinion, that the Russians would not enter Poland, though perhaps they might think proper just to shew themselves on the frontiers, as the friends and protectors of the counter-confederates; but he added, that the Poles could not do better than to provide for the security of themselves; that a measure, like that in question, appeared to be the only method of inducing other Powers to turn their attention to the same point; and that, in fine, all hopes of foreign succour must depend on the resources the Poles could shew them they possessed, and on the

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conduct they manifested under the existing circumstances.

The Marquis de Lucchesini, having thus adroitly paved the way to a more explicit declaration of his master's new sentiments, lost no time in bringing it forward in a mode which admitted of no misconception. On the 4th of May following, he presented to his Polish Majesty a ministerial note, in which he declared, in the name of the King his master, "Que sa Majesté Prussienne ne prenoit aucune connoissance de ce qui faisoit l'object des occupations de la Diète actuelle." Though the meaning of this declaration was pretty plain, the delicate and guarded manner in which it was worded, while it undoubtedly did great credit to the King of Prussia's feelings, prevented the unexpected blow it conveyed from being felt too strongly; and, perhaps, the sanguine prejudices of the Poles, and their absolute dependance on the honour and good faith of their great ally, might have misled them into constructions of it less positively hostile to them than this able negociator desired. To avoid such a mistake, and to convince the Poles, at once, what was the determination of the court of Berlin, M. de Lucchesini, a few days afterwards, presented another note; in which, by the order of the King his master, he declared, "Que sa Majesté Prussienne

“ sienne n’avoit pris aucune part à la nouvelle
 “ constitution ; et que, si le parti patriotique en-
 “ tendait de la defendre à main armée, le Roi de
 “ Prusse ne se croyait pas obligé de le secourir
 “ aux termes du traité.”

Conclusive as this declaration undoubtedly was, the Polish nation, not yet convinced that the sentiments and language of the Prussian minister were precisely those of the Prussian monarch ; and recollecting as well the various circumstances of his direct and personal interference in the formation of their new constitution, as the dispatch which he had written to Comte de Goltz immediately after the act of the 3d of May 1791, a copy of which, as we have seen, had been delivered by that minister to the King and the Diet—the Polish nation thought it incumbent upon them to make one trial more, before they finally acquiesced in a change of conduct so destructive to their dearest interests. They accordingly, in a formal and ministerial manner, demanded of his Prussian Majesty the contingent which he was bound to furnish them, by virtue of the 6th article of the treaty which subsisted between him and the Republic.

The ministerial answer to this demand was vague and dilatory. His Prussian Majesty, however,

ever, anxious no doubt to put his conduct towards his allies in its true point of view, and unwilling to leave a matter which concerned him so nearly, both as a king and a man of honour, to the management of any one who, not feeling as he did, might do injustice to the purity of his sentiments, once more took up the pen, and wrote the following letter to the King of Poland. I shall take the liberty of giving it at length, as I did that to the Comte de Goltz; and I shall, with it, conclude the subject of Poland; as the subsequent events which have taken place in that country, and the steps which have since been taken by his Prussian Majesty, go beyond the period to which I originally limited myself.

To what I have said upon this interesting subject I will add only one observation. Injurious as has been the conduct both of Russia and Prussia towards Poland, it is to a faction in England that the miseries under which that unhappy country now groans are, in a great measure, to be attributed. Had the government of this country been left at liberty to prevent the court of St. Petersburg from retaining the District of Ocza-kow, neither the invasion of Poland by the Russian and Prussian armies, nor the dismemberment of her provinces, which we now may daily look for, would have taken place. Let that faction
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then at least be silent on an occasion, when they must know, that their counter-negotiations have contributed to cause the evils they pretend to deplore; let them, before they bring forward insidious motions, calculated to mislead the public judgment, and to impede the active operations of their country in the hour of danger, prove that they had no share in the mischiefs they now find it convenient to reprobate. Until they do, the world must continue to think, that the original of the bust in the gallery at St. Petersburg is the last man in Europe, whom it becomes to stand forward as the champion of the Polish nation.

ALFRED.

LETTER

*LETTER FROM THE KING OF PRUSSIA TO THE
KING OF POLAND,*

REFERRED TO IN THE PRECEDING LETTER.

“ MONSIEUR, MON FRERE,

“ LE Grand Maréchal de Lithuanie, Comte Potocki, m'a remis la lettre que V. M. m'a écrite, en date du 31 Mai. J'y vois avec regret les embarras dans lesquels la République de Pologne se trouve engagée aujourd'hui. Mais j'avouerai aussi avec franchise, qu'après tout ce qui s'est passé depuis une année, ils étaient aisés à prévoir. V. M. se rappellera que, dans plus d'une occasion, le Marquis de Lucchesini à été chargé de lui manifester, tant à elle même qu'aux membres prépondérantes du gouvernement, mes justes appréhensions à ce sujet. Des le moment ou le rétablissement de la tranquillité générale en Europe m'a permis de m'expliquer, et que l'Imperatrice de Russie à laissée entrevoir une opposition décidée contre l'ordre des choses introduit par la revolution du 3 Mai 1791, ma facon de penser, et le langage des mes ministres n'ont jamais varié; et en regardant d'un oeil tranquille la nouvelle constitution, que la République s'est donnée à mon insen, et sans mon concurrence, je n'ai jamais songé à la soutenir, ou à la protéger. J'ai prédit, au contraire, que les mesures menaçantes et les préparatifs de la guerre, aux quels la Diète n'a cessée d'aviser coup sur coup, provequeroit infailliblement le ressentiment de l'Imperatrice de Russie, et attireroit à la Pologne les maux qu'on pretendoit éviter. L'événement à justifié ces apparences, et on ne scauroit se dissimuler dans le moment présent que, sans la nouvelle forme
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de gouvernement de la République, et sans les efforts qu'elle à annoncées pour la soutenir, la cour de Russié ne se seroit point décidée pour les démarches vigoureuses, qu'elle vient d'embrasser. Quelque soit l'amitié que j'ai vouée à V. M. et la part que je prends à tout ce qui la concerne, elle sentira elle même, que l'état de choses ayant entièrement changé depuis l'alliance que j'ai contracté avec la République, et les conjectures présentes amenés par la constitution du 3 Mai 1791, postérieure à mon traité, n'étant point applicable aux engagemens que s'y trouvent stipulés, il ne tient pas à moi de déferer à l'attente de V. M. si les intentions du parti patriotique sont toujours les mêmes, et s'il persiste à vouloir soutenir son ouvrage. Mais si, en revenant sur ses pas, elle considéroit les difficultés qui s'élèvent de tous cotés, je serois tout prêt à me concerter avec S. M. l'Imperatrice, et de m'entendre on même tems avec la cour de Vienne, pour tâcher de concilier les differens intérêts, et convenir des mesures capables de rendre à la Pologne sa tranquillité. Je me flatte que S. M. retrouvera dans ces dispositions et dans ces assurances les sentimens de l'amitié sincere et de la consideration avec laquelle, &c.

" Berlin, le 8 Juin, 1792."

TRANSLATION OF THE PRECEDING.

" SIR, MY BROTHER,

" THE Great Marshal of Lithuania, Count Potocki, has delivered to me the letter which your Majesty wrote to me, dated the 31st of May. I see in it, with regret, the embarrassments in which the Republic of Poland finds itself at present engaged. But I will also frankly avow, that, after every thing which has passed during the last year, they were easy to have been foreseen. Your Majesty will recollect that, on more than one occasion, the Marquis de Lucchesini was charged to make known to you, as well as to the principal members of the government, my just apprehensions in this respect. From the moment that the re-establishment of general tranquillity in Europe allowed me to explain myself, and that the Empress of Russia manifested a decided opposition to the order of things introduced by the revolution of the 3d of May 1791, my manner of thinking, and the language of my ministers, have never varied; and, while I beheld with a tranquil eye the new constitution which the Republic gave itself without my knowledge, and without my concurrence, I have never dreamt of supporting or of protecting it. On the contrary, I foretold, that the menacing measures, and the preparations for war, which the Diet has not ceased upon every occasion to adopt, would infallibly provoke the resentment of the Empress of Russia, and bring upon Poland the evils which they seemed calculated to avoid. The event has justified these appearances; and it cannot, in the present moment, be dissembled, that, had it not been for
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the new form of government of the Republic, and the efforts which it has announced for its support, the court of Russia would not have decided on the vigorous measures which it has now adopted. Great as may be the friendship which I have vowed to your Majesty, and whatever interest I may have in all which concerns you, you yourself will perceive, that the state of things being entirely changed since the alliance which I contracted with the Republic, and the existing conjectures brought about by the constitution of the 3d of May 1791, subsequent to my treaty, not being applicable to the engagements which are there stipulated, it is not in my power to comply with your Majesty's expectation, if the intentions of the patriotic party continue to be the same, and if it persists in its determination to support its work. But if, on reviewing the steps it has taken, it shall reflect on the difficulties which arise on all sides, I shall be ready to concert with her Majesty the Empress, and at the same time to come to an understanding with the court of Vienna, for the purpose of endeavouring to conciliate the different interests, and to agree upon measures capable of restoring to Poland its tranquillity. I flatter myself that your Majesty will retrace in these dispositions, and in these assurances, the sentiments of sincere friendship and regard with which, &c.

"Berlin, 8th June, 1792."

LETTER XLIII.

SIR,

WHEN I announce to the public, that with this letter the correspondence of ALFRED will conclude, I feel a degree of solicitude and apprehension, which can be relieved only by my confidence that the public indulgence is never withheld from him, whose object it has been to state, in their true point of view, those great and leading events, on an accurate knowledge of which so essentially depends the welfare of our country.

How this object has been fulfilled, it is for the public to determine. On a careful perusal of what I have written, I can with truth declare that no fact has been misrepresented, and that no inference has been drawn with an intent to mislead. I have endeavoured as shortly, though as satisfactorily, as I could, to lay before your readers a review of the leading events, which for some years past have engaged the general attention; and it has been my earnest wish to do this, as becomes one who presumes to address the public, with fairness and impartiality.

When

When I commenced my correspondence, it was not my intention to have extended it to the length to which it has since gone. The importance of some particular subjects will however, I trust, plead as my excuse for having gone further in their discussion than I had proposed. The settled policy and unvaried system of Russia apply too closely to the interests of Great Britain, not to be a subject of the highest importance to every one who reflects upon their obvious consequences. The value of Oczakow, as connected with its surrounding countries, and as applied to the maritime States of Europe, is a point of the utmost concern to every well-wisher to the existing prosperity and pre-eminence of his country; and the situation of Poland, the injurious conduct of the surrounding Powers towards her, and the evident tendency of the measures which they now are openly carrying on against her—all these are objects of such superior magnitude, and so immediately decisive, not only on our existing interests, but upon those of our posterity, that to have passed them over without due investigation would have been an unpardonable omission; and to have mentioned them, without at the same time candidly investigating their causes and their consequences, would have been a mean and paltry desertion of that duty, which the recorder of national events owes to the public whom he addresses.

dresses. In the execution of this task, as much was found to censure, much has of course been blamed. This has been a painful part of the obligation imposed upon me; and it became doubly so, when the cause of censure arose from the unjustifiable—I had almost termed it criminal, conduct of leading men among ourselves. If, however, nothing has been said which is unfounded in fact, the public opinion, whatever it may pronounce with regard to them, will justify and support the inferences I have drawn. To record the virtues of public men, and to state to their contemporaries, and to future ages, the blessings resulting from their administration, is a grateful and pleasing task. But historical truth requires that equal justice should be done. While we indulge in the detail of patriotic efforts, and of services wisely and honourably performed, it is equally our duty candidly and explicitly to develop the arts of faction, and to point out to the present age, and to posterity, the causes and the movers of those events, by which the interests and the honour of our country have been materially affected.

I am aware that, during the period to which the facts detailed in these letters are confined, events, the most extraordinary and unprecedented in the annals of history, have happened in a neighbouring

bouring country ; and it may perhaps be thought, that these events have not been so fully stated as their importance required. However these occurrences may have interested the world, or excited curiosity, it was not within the plan of this undertaking to enter deeply into them ; because they have been fully detailed by others, and because, down to the period to which these statements and observations are limited, any account of them would have presented only an imperfect history of a country in a state of anarchy, where the most violent and extravagant usurped the reins of government, and retained them till others, still more violent and extravagant, appeared ; and where, instead of those whose object was the establishment of order, such only as encouraged and promoted the licentiousness of the mob, were carried to the summit of power.—Very much in the same state has that nation continued to the present moment. Principles, subversive of all civil society and civil government, have been professed and acted upon one day, and deserted for something as bad the next. Instead therefore of entering upon such a discussion, it will be sufficient to observe, that it becomes us to look with compassion upon a nation, plunged by these means into the deepest distress ; that it becomes us equally to feel with gratitude the blessings of order and good government, which no people ever possessed
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in a greater degree than ourselves ; and that, above all, it becomes us to resist with firmness the propagation of those principles, which would deprive us of every enjoyment ; and to preserve with our lives that constitution, from which every thing dear to a Briton is derived.

I cannot, Sir, take my leave of the public, without returning them my most grateful thanks, for the very flattering marks of attention with which they have honoured my preceding letters. Many circumstances have combined to render them less perfect than I could have wished. I fear it will be considered as a weak apology to say, that they were written in haste, and under the pressure of many other avocations. This, though it may account for imperfections, will perhaps ill justify the boldness of maintaining a correspondence of this nature. Your readers, however, must determine upon the facts and reasonings which the letters contain. Should they be in any degree satisfactory, their indulgence will pardon the deficiencies, occasioned by the causes to which I have alluded.



ALFRED.

THE END.

